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MY MEMOIRS

MARGUERITE STEINHEIL

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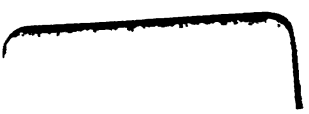

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MADAME STEINHEIL

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MY MEMOIRS

BY

MARGUERITE STEINHEIL

ILLUSTRATED

New York
STURGIS & WALTON
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1912

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WRITING MY MEMOIRS

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CHAPTER I

CHILDHOOD

(*"Monsieur et Madame Edouard Japy have the honour to inform you of the birth of a daughter." Beaucourt, April, 16th,* 1869.)

Beaucourt is a village in the "Belfort Territory," not far from the Swiss and German frontiers. It was in that village, at the "Château Edouard"—all large mansions in that region are called "châteaux," and the name of the owner is added to the word—that I was born some forty years ago.

Beaucourt and nearly all of the surrounding country belongs to, or is dependent upon, the Japy family, whose vast factories and mills give a living to thousands of workmen.

After a family quarrel, my father, Edouard Japy, had severed his connection with "Japy Bros." some time before my birth. Having resigned his directorship of the Company, he busied himself exclusively with his huge estate, devoting his days to the farm and woods, to his beloved park and the picturesque cascades which he had designed himself, to his flowers and orchards, to his family and to music.

My mother was the daughter of the innkeeper of the Red Lion, the chief inn of Montbéliard in those already distant days. Edouard Japy had married Mlle. Emilie Rau in spite of the opposition of his family, who had declared that such a marriage would be a *mésalliance.* He had married her—as he often told me when, as a young girl, I became more than his child: his friend and confidante—because "she was very beautiful and very good." My mother had dark eyes, large

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and very tender, and her raven-black hair, when loosed, streamed down to her feet. She was of a quiet and sunny nature, kind, serene, and smiling. She ignored evil, was exquisitely artless, and never understood a great deal of the realities of life, because she did not see them. She gave away and spent without counting, was indulgent in a manner as touching as it was unconscious, and went through life a simple and happy being, knowing neither great exultation nor deep depression, incapable of sustained effort or serious worry. Edouard adored Emilie, Emilie adored Edouard, and all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

The man who was to be my father having decided—and he had both will and charm—that Mlle. Rau should be his wife, managed to have her sent to a boarding-school at Stuttgart, so that she might complete her education. Mlle. Rau was then fourteen years old. Two years later she became Madame Japy. Her husband was then twenty-five.

I do not intend to sketch here the history of the Japys of Beaucourt; but after having given a few details about my parents, I may add a few about my grandparents, if only to satisfy the curiosity of those who believe as much in atavism as in heredity.

The first Japys who "matter" were two brothers, the grandfather and great-uncle of my father. The one, an inventor of genius, at first turned his attention to clocks and then to all kinds of machine tools—screwing, planing, riveting, bolting, boring, and so on. He created; his brother organised. The first had ideas; the second rendered them practical and profitable. I will not say any more about the financier and company-promoter, but the following story about the inventor is well worth telling: He had built for himself a small house, "on stilts," as it were. Below the floor of the large and only room, there was nothing but—air, and then the grass of the meadow. The inventor reached his retreat with the help of a rope ladder, which he withdrew when he had climbed up to his famous "idea-room." There, safe from intrusion, he worked, day after day, and for his meals was satisfied with a little bread and cheese. It was generally dark before he returned

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to earth and joined his wife, who, I have been told, was strikingly beautiful.

Later, the children of those two brothers, developed the already important undertaking of their fathers, and gradually the firm Japy Frères became what it is to-day, one of the largest and strongest industrial concerns in France.

I was educated by resident governesses and professors. One of the governesses, questioned thirty-five years later, was to declare that at the age of five, I used to lie a good deal but that I succeeded in being forgiven, thanks to my "talents as an actress."

At my trial in the Paris Assize Court, the Public Prosecutor made a great deal out of this evidence, and saw therein a sure sign of my precocious depravity.

Personally, I believe that all normal children tell fibs, more or less, and I am delighted to think that I was a normal little girl. As for my talent as an actress, I have since seen too many little girls of five to believe seriously in it. I smile, and I proceed . . .

My father looked after my education with charming care. My brother and my sisters were brought up in boarding-schools, but my school was at home, in a large room on the first floor. I still see that light and beautiful room, overlooking our park, the trees of which, alive with birds, were so often the cause of much inattention to my work. I see the two blackboards, the one covered at regular intervals with detested figures and the other written over with words and sentences or the names of places and people. My father, wearing a stern expression, kept entering the room to see "how the little one was getting on," and invariably had some recommendation to make: "Since you are telling her about the Odyssey, make her follow Ulysses' travels on a map," or "I see you are reading the Iliad, pray insist on Andromache, Hector, Achilles, but skip whenever you come to Nestor; he was a fool and a bore." . . . "Promise to take her to Domrémy if she learns to love Joan of Arc." . . . "You are studying Napoleon . . . Wait one moment, I'll fetch an album of Raffet's drawings for

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her." . . . "What, you are drawing in this room, in this weather! Run down into the garden: that's the ideal place where to draw" . . . and I always thought my father was absolutely right.

There was a large globe in my schoolroom, and quite a library of travel-books. Ah! the tropics, the flowers, the birds! Ah! to see the birds of Paradise in Borneo, or humming-birds in Brazil! To gather orchids in Central Africa or in Queensland . . . I adore two rivers: the Orinoco and the Brahmaputra, and two mountains: Kilimanjaro and Popocatapetl, because of their extraordinary names! My favourite heroes were Hannibal and—Napoleon, of course.

My father began to teach me the violin when I was four, and the piano and the organ the following year. He had his own ideas on the education of girls, but applied them to me only. When I was a mere child, he taught me to bow, to arrange flowers, and to recognise and appreciate things beautiful, ancient or rare—old furniture, old tapestries, old china, old pewter. He showed me the hall-marks on silver, he made me caress cameos and enamel-work and touch embroideries and old lace reverently. He made me go up and down a staircase ten, twenty times in succession: "You see, darling, any one can go down steps without being ridiculous, but to go up a staircase, that's another matter. Now then, come down—that's it—raise your head—go slowly—like a queen in books of long ago. Look as though you came down from Heaven and had wings, and didn't press upon the carpet!" And he added gaily, "when I go down a staircase, I feel as if I were an emperor descending towards his loving people! You ought to imagine a long train behind you, held by two little eighteenth-century negroes, twenty steps above." And the lessons went on again: "Now walk upstairs. Lightly, lightly, little one! Don't move your arms. Now turn your head round . . . Ah! there's a pretty picture! By the way, you must dress your hair in another way. And what is that gold bracelet round your wrist! A flower, that's the only jewel you may wear at present, Mademoiselle!"

He designed my dresses, and later on he insisted that I

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should learn to make them myself. He gave me a riding-master, a violin teacher and a piano teacher, besides the various governesses who taught me the "other things," but it was with him and through him that I learned the little I have learned. His was a beautiful life, and there sang in my young heart those words which my father often whispered in my ear: "I love you every day more than yesterday and less than tomorrow." I looked upon my father as a kind of marvellously beneficent Deity. Sometimes I heard it said that he was "not practical," but I pitied those who criticised him. If he hated to calculate, that was his own affair, after all! Though warned of the catastrophe which never befell him, he remained cheerful, kind and generous. Our house was known as "*La Maison du Bon Dieu.*" Every one was welcome there, and my father, who was a gourmet, and had a remarkable chef, treated his guests to feasts worthy of Lucullus, and to the best wines in his cellars—under one condition, invariably the same: that they should listen to the concert in the drawing-room, afterwards.

My father kept my mother's whole family, paid the debts of his friends, and did his utmost to assist any one and every one. Whenever he passed through a village round Beaucourt, men, women, and children would appear at the windows or doors of their cottages, and greet him with a sign, a word, or a smile of gratitude. And I used to sit as close to him as possible, in the trap; I was proud and happy and felt like shouting to the good villagers: "You know, he is my daddy!"

Dear father! they were to slander him, too, at my trial. A member of his own family asserted that he was a brute and a drunkard. And when I revolted against such an abominable statement, my counsel tried to appease me. "Don't take any notice," he muttered. "The statement, it seems, has been made to save you at any cost. Being the daughter of a drunkard, you could be considered, to some extent, as irresponsible. It was tactics, not an insult!"

In my memory I can see next to my father the lovable figure of M. Doriand, my parents' "old" and my "great" friend.

M. Doriand was a professor in the Empress's College for girls at Moscow, and his conversation was a rare delight. He

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came every year to spend his holidays with us. He remained three months at Beaucourt, and during the rest of the year sent us a long letter every week. In the summer, when he was with us, he made me read over again all the lessons I had taken since the previous summer, and he discussed them so wittily and opened up to me such new horizons, retold me history in such a fascinating and personal manner, and managed to render mathematics so interesting, that I never thought of complaining of the unusual way of making me spend my holidays.

Then he painted very well, and gave me lessons in water-colours. He developed in me such a keen taste for art that later on my father decided I should attend an art school.

My "great friend" or my "grandpapa from Russia," as I often called him, had exquisite manners. When, many years later, I became what is called a "woman of the world," and even a Paris "Society Queen," if I may quote a term so often applied to me, I was able to judge the various types of people who composed that Society and their manners, and I realised then that M. Doriand did not belong to his time. He had the exquisite politeness of the "honest" people of the *grand siècle*. I still see him bowing with easy grace whenever he met my mother, my sisters or me. Never did a vulgar or trivial word pass from his lips. He loved what he called, not "beautiful" French, but "good" French. He had for the most humble the same little attentions and the same gentle and old-time courteousness as for his peers. He addressed his aged sister, who resided near Beaucourt, as he would have a queen, for he believed that nowhere more than in the home were perfect manners and courteous speech more becoming, and that to no one more than to his own people did a man owe respect. He took off his hat when he met the women about the farm, and never kept it on in a shop. He spoke slowly and softly, and cultivated the *mot propre* (the exact word). It was a joy to hear him, as much to the ear as to the mind. As long as I remained under his influence, I tried to speak as he did; but destiny took me to Paris, where, alas! they speak Parisian, not French.

My grandpapa from Russia seemed to know everything and to be able to do anything. He would, for instance, talk to me

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for an hour about a tragedy of Voltaire, which he afterwards compared with a tragedy of his beloved Racine; or perhaps a book by some little known Russian author, whom he placed far above the work of many celebrated writers—German, French or English. Then he would suddenly tell me the life of a plant at our feet or the story of the stone on which he sat. Afterwards, we would go to the kitchen, and there he taught me how to prepare some kind of soup or sweet dish *à la Russe*. When this was over we would go to the music-room and there I had to sing or play to him an air by Mozart, Glück, Lulli, or Rameau. He used to say: "You will play the music of Beethoven and Wagner (he, like my father, had already recognised Wagner's genius) when you are older. One must have suffered and loved to understand these geniuses." He taught me to sculpture, to bind books, to solder . . .

My father joined us and said: "My dear Doriand, you are monopolising my daughter. You have had her to yourself the whole morning."

"How dare you complain," the other retorted; "you have her the whole of the year."

How delightfully they spoiled me, those two dear souls, and how coquettish they made me! I recall them sitting on an old rustic bench in the large avenue of chestnut-trees. I felt that they were talking about me, and I ran into the house to put on my most becoming dress, and then went out and walked up and down slowly, with a book in my hand, and not too far from them, and knowing all the while that their eyes were following me! There did not seem to be any harm in this, but one day, my mother catching me at my little game, scolded me and my father and his old friend much more. . . . As a rule, when my dear mother scolded them, my father went to the organ and improvised a war-march and M. Doriand, standing near him, turned imaginary pages. My mother could not help laughing and we guilty three did the same, of course.

I had two sisters, Juliette, the eldest—who, when I was a little girl, became the wife of M. Herr, an engineer then residing in Bayonne, where, later, I met M. Steinheil—and Mimi, younger than I by four years, who was my mother's favourite,

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just as I was my father's. I had also a brother, Julien, who enlisted in an infantry regiment at Belfort and became there the friend of M. Sheffer, who was to be my *fiancé* of a few months.

We rose early at Beaucourt. After a quick breakfast and an hour given to recreation in the park, or to the care of my flowers—like my parents, I had a passion for flowers, especially hydrangea and roses—I went to the schoolroom for my lessons. The afternoon was divided between study, games and household duties. In the evening, after dinner, we had music in the large *salon*, the very one which during the war, the Germans sacked and threw into confusion. . . . Ah! it was awe-inspiring to hear my father describe their stay at the "castle" and tell us how this splendid drawing-room had been turned by those "Prussians" into a kitchen, the grand piano into a larder and the precious curtains of antique red damask into horse blankets and dish-cloths . . .

There was always a large number of guests at home. The three-storied house had forty rooms and they were more often occupied than empty. Our evening concerts were my father's great joy. He sat at the organ, the enormous and rubicund Mme. Koger, my piano teacher, settled down at the piano, I took my violin and three or four musicians from Belfort, violinists and 'cellists, completed our little orchestra.

During the winter—and the winter is extremely sharp in that part of France—we used to skate on the Rhone-Rhine Canal, or we went for long rides in a sleigh, on the roads deep in snow. And then, we tobogganned. A "train" of tobogganners was formed at the top of a hill with a "captain" at its head; we rushed at break-neck speed down the hill-side, the train broke up, the toboggans overturned and hurled us into the snow, when a free fight ensued over the responsibility for the accident. I generally triumphed over my cousins, both boys and girls, and was rather proud of it!

Had the examining magistrate in charge of my case known this detail, he would no doubt have come to the conclusion that, since, as a child, I was strong enough to be victorious, with snowballs, over my playmates, it was clear that, as a

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woman, I must have been strong enough to commit the horrible crimes of which he accused me!

Winter also brought with it an increased number of visits, to the sick and poor, and as my mother never allowed me to give them anything that I had not worked at myself, not a day passed without our devoting at least one or two hours to preparing warm clothes for the needy. As for my father, he had a wonderful knack of saying and doing the right thing whenever he called on the people he looked after, and this made it one of my happiest occupations to accompany him on this round of mercy.

Christmas was a great day to us. The Christmas tree, which my father always uprooted himself—it was almost a ceremony with him—was first lit up for the family, then for the servants and farmhands, and a third time for the poor people who came in crowds from the neighbouring villages, and whom my parents received one after another with a word of welcome and a pleasant personal remark which at once put them at their ease.

On January 1 we paid "morning" calls until 2 P.M. In all the houses where we went, the hosts and hostesses wished to detain my father for "at least an hour," for he was gay and charming, good to look upon and his kindness was proverbial . . . but he refused: "No, no—I must go, my dear friends; I have still so many visits to pay—for instance, I must call on this rascal here (and he laughingly dealt a blow at a friend close to him) whom I have already passed three times on the road and met in five drawing-rooms this morning. But there you are, I must, mustn't I, you rogue, express my good wishes for a happy New Year to him in his own house—and to think that afterwards I shall meet him again in half a dozen places and that, to cap it all, I will have to go home to receive him, so that he may return my good wishes. Ah! the old traditions! . . ."

Then came the family dinner, which lasted till the evening and the day ended with . . . music, of course. While we played, my mother slumbered peacefully in a fine old armchair, where once had sat my great-grandmother, the beautiful

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wife of the inventor. . . . But we went to bed early, for on the previous night we had hardly slept at all.

In fact, a few minutes before midnight, on December 31, songs rose under the windows of the "castle"—beautiful songs, simple, broad-winged, with words which varied a little from year to year, but with music centuries old, and always the same, for it could not have been improved upon. Then, surrounded by their children and their servants, my parents received the singers on the threshold of their house. The singers shook the snow from their coats and their fur caps, took off their wooden shoes, shook hands with us all, and the feast began. My father distributed among them baskets of apples and walnuts, whole hams, strings of sausages, sacks of potatoes, and Alsatian cakes. And when the good people had gone and their voices could no longer be heard—my father wrapped me up in furs and we went together to look at the snow. And somehow, it always seemed more wonderful and more blue to us on New Year's night. My father told me marvellous tales and I did not feel sleepy at all. But an hour later, assuming a gruff voice, he exclaimed: "What does this mean, Mademoiselle? Still up at three in the morning at your age." When he had gently carried me in his arms to my room, he said: "Go quickly to sleep, 'Puppele' (an Alsatian expression meaning 'little doll'), mother would be angry if she knew."

Mother knew perfectly well, for she had been waiting by the fireside in the dining-room and she never retired without having seen me in my bed and kissed me. But she was not angry on this occasion, and with her sweet, indulgent philosophy she said: "After all, there is but one First of January in the year."

On Sundays we attended service in the Temple of Beaucourt. The district is a Protestant one, a very Protestant one indeed. My first pastor was old M. Cuvier, a descendant of the great naturalist Baron Cuvier, who died in 1832.

He was very handsome and impressive, was Pastor Cuvier, with his mane of white hair and his gleaming eyes under the bushy eyebrows. My father used to tell me that he looked like Liszt, whom he had met on several occasions in Germany

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and Hungary, and in Paris. The old clergyman was a great orator, and although I did not always understand what he said, I loved to listen to him. He often called on us, and, in order to tease him, my father, a staunch Huguenot but broad-minded and endowed with a sense of humour, made him sit at the table next to the Catholic priest of Beaucourt. At the beginning of the dinner the two men hardly dared look at one another, and could hardly eat, much to my mother's alarm. . . . M. Cuvier said, "Let us not talk religion," and the priest added, "Nor politics." My father remarked, "You are both quite right" . . . and forthwith he started eulogising Darwin's theories and explaining to his two guests the law of natural selection and how it was quite evident that "each species was not independently created." . . . But all ended well, thanks to the good-humour of my father, the smiling grace of my mother, and the excellent wines and liqueurs in our cellars.

Old Pastor Cuvier was very kind to me. He often received me at his house, which stood opposite the wood in our estate. He had in his library all the works of his illustrious ancestor, and writing down the names on a slip of paper, which I have kept through all these years, he made me promise that I would read, when I was grown-up, the "Tableau Elémentaire de l'Histoire Naturelle des Animaux" and the "Règne Animal distribué d'après son Organisation." I promised, of course, but did not keep my promise. May the two Cuviers, the naturalist and the pastor, forgive me!

M. Cuvier was fond of relating some episodes—within my understanding—of the Revolution and the First Empire. He talked about the Terror as though he had lived through those dreadful days, and about Napoleon as though he had known him intimately. We went several times to Montbéliard together to visit the Cuvier Museum there, and he would stand in contemplation before the great man's enormous and very dirty cap. And my pastor would exclaim: "What a head! What a head!"

He so often talked to me about a certain book by Cuvier on elephants that the thought of elephants haunted me and I begged my father to show me one. And so it was that I went, when I was a little girl, to Paris. The elephant I

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saw there pleased me very much, although I would have liked it to have been more savage; and, in spite of a ride on the back of the great beast, I was somewhat disappointed.

My pastor was very, very old, and his son came to assist him in his work, but both left Beaucourt after a short time. The son, like thousands of Protestants in the Jura and Switzerland at the time, was a Monodist, and believed that Monod, the great preacher and revivalist, was Christ himself. . . . M. Cuvier died in Switzerland. A new pastor came to Beaucourt, M. Bach, and I became in time the organist of his church and the leader of the choir.

Three times a week the band organised by my father came to rehearse at our house. Chamber-music did not quite satisfy him, and he had founded this band, which numbered forty-five musicians. Ah! those rehearsals. When the weather was fair they took place under the chestnut trees, but if it rained or snowed the "forty-five" and their conductor would gather in the main drawing-room of the "castle," where two hundred people could have been seated comfortably, or in the dining-room, to the pathetic despair of my mother, who would ask my father: "Don't you think, Edouard, that your band is just a little too noisy?" My father kissed her laughingly, flourished the baton, and the rehearsal began.

One of my father's greatest delights, and mine, too, was to travel together. After my fourteenth birthday he took me to Italy, to Germany, and to Switzerland, where we went round the Léman (he forbade me to say Lake of Geneva); and, of course, we continued to pay our periodical visits to Belfort, Nancy and Bâle.

It was in Belfort that I heard an opera for the first time. This was *Faust*. My father, who was a friend of Gounod, had told me all kinds of things about Gounod's "nice" music, but I was not half as impressed as I thought I should be. Perhaps it was because Faust was too stout, because Valentine sang too loudly as he died, because Mephistopheles was not diabolical enough, and perhaps, too, owing to the fact that Marguerite's spinning-wheel, having been mislaid, had been replaced at the eleventh hour by a—sewing-machine. And

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to think that they could have found a spinning-wheel in almost any house of the neighbourhood!

It was also at Belfort that I met M. Thiers, with whom my father was well acquainted. This "meeting" took place, I believe, in 1877. I had to hand a huge bouquet to M. Thiers. Every one was calling him "The Liberator and the Saviour of France," and those words so fixed themselves in my mind that I quite forgot the little speech I had learned by heart; and when M. Thiers stepped from his carriage, I handed him the bouquet and said, "There you are, Mr. Saviour" (*Monsieur le Sauveur*). The little fat and ugly man with the round head, the beady eyes, and the spectacles, took the bouquet, lifted me up and kissed me. Later on he spent an evening at our house, and naturally I asked for a story. Thereupon, describing some wonderful ceremony, he mentioned Napoleon, sixteen horses drawing a funeral car, and a magnificent palace with a golden cupola, near the Seine, in Paris. . . . And years later, I realised that Thiers had been telling me about the translation of Napoleon's ashes to the Invalids, in the days of King Louise-Philippe, when he was Prime Minister.

We used to go for long walks or rides, my father and I. We both loved to feel the wind in our faces, and we took joy in the smell of the earth, the smell of grass, the voice of the trees. Often he went out without me, but as soon as I was free from my work I went in search of him, fastening the ribbons of my big straw hat as I ran over hill and dale. Instinct led me in the right direction, and in time I found him, and rushing up, rested in his arms, which was ever my way of greeting him. We returned home together, and on the way never failed to admire our favourite old trees, to linger by the lakes we liked best, to gather ferns and foxglove, and to go at least once round the greenhouses.

And we had endless surprises, and we laughed at everything, often for no reason at all. A word, a common thought, the shape of a leaf or of a cloud, sent us into fits of ecstasy or laughter. And my father would kiss me and whisper: "We get on well together, we two, don't we, Puppele;" and I would answer: "I love you, *my* daddy."

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"Quite right, too," he would say. "Try to love me as long as you possibly can. A father like the one you own is worth all the husbands in the world."

What happy days! What a lovely life! How everything smiled on me, how everything seemed good and simple. . . . Alas! a few years later disenchantment was to begin, bringing in its wake, temptations, weaknesses, struggles and sorrows; and finally the whole fabric of my life was to be brought crashing down in a terrible, "sensational" drama. . . .

I fear that this note of poignant sadness and regret will sound again and again in these pages like a melancholy and distressing *leit-motiv* . . . But how could it be otherwise? How could I fail to realise, in an intensely painful and bitter manner, all that I have lost and all that I have suffered unjustly, when I recall my childhood and my radiant youth, and the days spent in Beaucourt with a mother infinitely loving and a father passionately devoted, and when I compare those years of happiness with the feverish, tangled years that followed and that resulted, after the appalling catastrophe in which I lost my husband and my mother, both foully done to death, in my being tried and imprisoned in Paris on a double charge of murder.

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CHAPTER II

YOUTH—MY FATHER'S DEATH—MY MARRIAGE

I MADE my début in society at seventeen. The circle was quite small, for there were Japys and ramifications of the Japys wherever we went, and, of course, as I knew them all, they were nothing new to me. It was only in Belfort that I met people whom I did not know. They were, however, for the most part only passing acquaintances that I made, for my parents guarded their "Puppele" most jealously . . .

I remember my first ball at Belfort. I wore a very simple gown, made of tulle in three shades of blue, and had a spray of apple-blossom in my hair and another at my waist. My father, taking a seat where he could survey the whole room, said gaily to me: "Meg (an affectionate diminutive for Marguerite), I distrust all these young men. Your entrance has caused a sensation, and all the officers of the garrison are staring at you. I hate it, but, on the other hand, I would have been furious if my daughter had passed unnoticed . . . I allow you to dance . . . with your brother."

Julien was now a second lieutenant, having left the military school of Saint-Maixent, where he had passed brilliantly through his examinations. I admired him very much in his new uniform, and, besides, I had a deep affection for this big brother of mine, who was bright, witty, a little irresponsible, and very much of a *mauvais sujet.*

During the whole of the evening we danced together, under the amused eyes of my father, who, surrounded by a small crowd of officers of all ranks who were anxious to dance with me, said to them: "Gentlemen, you may sit down by my side.

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I will not forbid you to look at my daughter and I am even willing to introduce you to her; but she absolutely refuses to dance with any one but her brother, and you know the proverb: '*Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut*' " (Woman's will, God's will).

I asked my father later on: "What have you against dancing, and why am I allowed to dance only with my brother? Did you, in your time, dance only with your sister?"

He did not reply directly to my question, but said: "I only care for slow, graceful, stately dances—dances from a distance, such as the minuet, the gavotte, or the pavane, in which the partners only touch fingers."

"But, father," I said, mischievously, "have you never danced modern dances—polka, mazurkas, valses?"

He assumed the expression of a child "caught in the act," and, with head bent down, whispered, as though he were making a confession: "The truth is I have loved, and still love dancing, any dancing, and I have spent whole nights dancing!" Then, raising his head, he added: "Only, you see, when one loves, one is illogical, and you don't know, my 'Puppele,' how I love you."

My mother said that my father's attitude was not fair to me, and that it was not right to close our door, as he seemed to wish to do, to all men under forty. We entertained more than ever, and at our evenings I played and sang . . . with my father. I saw a new meaning in our love-duets; I was a little intoxicated, my imagination ran loose, I sang with more feeling than I had done before. . . . And my parents were overwhelmed with suitors for my hand. My father consulted me, although he had quite made up his mind to do as *he* pleased in the matter. I always said "no," and he exclaimed: "Ah! how right you are. . . . It is really wonderful what a sensible daughter I have! . . . When you are twenty we will talk of marriage. Meanwhile, think a little of your father."

"A little!" When I thought of no one but of him! The following year he said the same thing to me, but with a slight alteration: "When you are twenty-*one*. . . ." And I gently pinched his ear, as Napoleon did to his grenadiers.

And I did listen, the more readily because it would have

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MY FATHER

MY MOTHER

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been impossible for me to have caused this father whom I worshipped the slightest pain.

It was about this time that I noticed that my father, in spite of his good humour, was not so happy as he pretended to be. He had long hours of despondency. Perhaps this was nothing new, but I had not noticed it before. Heedless childhood observes things rather than people. His nature knew revolts and disappointments of which I was dimly aware, although I did not understand them. I believe that, intensely artistic and imaginative as he was, he had formed an ideal which became more and more unattainable. Besides, he was a man of great enthusiasm and strong emotions, a man who put all his force and feeling into everything he did. His joys were ecstatic, his sorrows abysmal. The slightest trouble became, in his sensitive heart, unbearable grief, but on the other hand, music, a gallop over the countryside, the strong, pure light of heaven, a favourite book, a kind word, a colour-scheme . . . these things intoxicated him like wine. My mother, calm and sweet, knew no such emotion and was incapable of passion. My father told her that nothing could be great without passion, but she shook her head and said in her quiet way: "I have no temperament. I shall never be an artist or a poet. I like the earth and feel comfortable on it . . . and please don't be angry with me, *mon ami*." And with much common sense she would add: "You love to suffer . . . that's your trouble."

Sometimes, my father would improvise on the organ in order to forget his troubles and to relieve his sorrow—the worst of all sorrows because it was without cause—and his music was so inexpressibly mournful that it wrung my heart. Or he would strike the ivory keys fiercely, almost viciously, as though he were trying to crush his grief. I always tried to console him and often succeeded.

Between those fits of depression, he was merry as ever, and fairly radiated vitality around him, so much so that I could feel in an empty room whether he had just been there or not.

In the summer-time there was a constant going to and fro of people, and we made up many large parties of relations

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and friends. Often the officers of the neighbouring garrisons joined us and organised games and rallies (a kind of paper chase on horseback). And at other times we made excursions to the beauty spots of that beautiful part of France, to the Ballon d'Alsace, the Saut du Doubs. . . . My father and my brother were of course present, and my dogs, two big Danes and two Saint Bernards, followed me everywhere. In the winter, we hunted the boar near Mulhausen.

It was when I was seventeen that I had my first love-affair. As I have stated, my brother's best comrade was M. Sheffer, now, like Julien, a lieutenant at Belfort. I had known M. Sheffer for several years, and he often came to Beaucourt. My parents thought him charming and clever, and I thought the same—gradually there grew between us a kind of poetical intimacy. He wrote verses for me, and I learned them by heart; we read together under an oak-tree or by the cascade in the park, and, one evening, between two songs, Edouard —his name was Edouard, like my father—told me that he loved me.

His mother, a widow, came from Geneva, where she lived, to see us. My parents and I were at once drawn to this modest and gifted lady, with her silvery hair and her smooth pure brow. My father, who had a sincere affection for Lieut. Sheffer, would not make any promises, however, and when I told him that I was fond of "Edouard" he uttered vague words. . . . But he allowed him to come to see me, and he even promised that we should write to each other, from time to time.

A year later, my father quite unexpectedly told me that I must "try to forget young Sheffer." He could not consent to the marriage. . . . I was too young, he was too poor. . . . And the thought that I should marry an officer, who might be called upon, at any moment, to move from one garrison to another, did not please my father. And he concluded, gently: "Believe me, 'Puppele,' it will be wiser to part as soon as possible. You'll soon forget this little idyl. You are still but a babe; your whole life lies before you. . . . In order

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that you may forget the more easily, I will send you on a holiday to Bayonne with my son-in-law (M. Herr, my eldest sister's husband, who was then spending a few days at Beaucourt)." I was broken-hearted.

A few days later, I went with my brother-in-law to Lieut. Sheffer, and handed back to him whom I had for a year considered my fiancé, the letters he had sent me, and received in return those I had written to him.

I saw Lieut. Sheffer once again, and it was in the following terms that he described that final meeting, to the examining magistrate in January 1909: "Wishing to see Marguerite once more, I drove to Montbéliard [where the train was to pass that would take M. Herr and me to the South]. I wore civilian clothes and had a marguerite in my button hole... It is a childish detail, but I haven't forgotten it. I was able to exchange one last glance with her. I never saw her again . . ."

Thus ended this pretty romance, so tender and so pure, but one which, like every page of the book of my life, like every one of my actions and words, was to be interpreted in an unfavourable way, during my examination and at my trial. My past was searched, pried into, ransacked and misconstrued, and even this naïve and delightful romance, with my first emotions and my first dreams, was not spared, and failed to find grace in the sight of my tormentors. As my counsel declared in court: "They tried to find out, not only whether there had been intimate relations between Mlle. Japy and Lieut. Sheffer, but even whether, such relations being proved, a child was not born, who, having years later become an *Apache*, committed the double murder of the Impasse Ronsin, and spared his own mother!"

Nothing, however, it need hardly be said, was found against M. Sheffer or myself . . . except one thing! It appeared that I had once spent six days in Bâle, and this was at once construed into an elopement with M. Sheffer. But exhaustive investigations established the fact that the lieutenant was away at the time attending manœuvres, and it was finally discovered that the elopement to Bâle was nothing more serious than the visit of my mother and myself to the dentist, there being none in Beaucourt!

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It was at the Paris Court of Assize, in November 1909, more than twenty years after the end of my short-lived engagement, that I met once more the man who had been the hero of my first love-dream. I was sitting in the dock, on the "bench of infamy," as barristers call it, accused of having murdered my mother and my husband, and Major Sheffer came to the witness's "bar" in the well of the court and told our innocent little romance of long ago.

My dream was broken. Life did not seem worth living . . . But youth soon forgets. "We are not even capable of being unhappy a long time," Pascal said.

I spent two months in Bayonne and Biarritz, wrote every week to my parents, and received nearly every day long and delightful letters from my father.

Then, suddenly, I heard that my father had died. While drinking a glass of icy water he had fallen stone dead . . . of heart failure. It was on November 14th, 1888. I was nineteen years old. I thought I should lose my reason. They put me in the train and I reached Beaucourt, too late, alas, to see once more the beloved face of my father. He had already been laid in his coffin.

My father had been loved by all, and the Beaucourt temple was crowded at his funeral. All the musical societies of the neighbourhood came to pay him a last honour, and, massed together, they played Chopin's funeral march. . . . My poor mother was so prostrated with grief that she was unable to attend the funeral. . . . I will not say any more about a day which was one of the most painful in my life. . . . Besides, I was so numb with grief that my memory of it is blurred.

During the days that followed, everything at home was thrown into such confusion, and the sight of all that my father had touched or loved was so distressing to me, that I begged my mother to let me leave Beaucourt for a while. . . . She raised her tear-stained face and said pitifully: "And I?" I felt ashamed of my selfishness, and we fell into each other's arms . . . and, of course, I thought no more of going away. . . .

Mimi, my younger sister, was ill, and I should have fallen ill too, had I not had to nurse her and my mother. When

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they recovered, I spent whole days in the woods and by the lakes in our estate, in all those hallowed spots where my father and I spent so many unforgettable hours together.

For a year I was unable to take my violin from its case, or to open the piano. Everything was changed, and I felt like a lost soul.

Towards the end of the summer of 1889, I went to Paris with my sisters, to visit the Exhibition. Mme. Herr, who had come to Beaucourt to fetch me, had spoken a great deal to my mother about a great friend of hers, a certain M. Steinheil, a nephew of Meissonier, and I had been asked to go to Bayonne later on with the Herrs.

We stayed six weeks in Paris and as true "Provincials," anxious to see everything, we entered the Exhibition as soon as the gates were thrown open and left it at night only when we found ourselves almost too tired to stand. This lasted for a month, and then it occurred to me that there was something else to see in Paris besides the Exhibition.

I had not been in Paris since the time when I had gone there with my father to see a live elephant, and I drank in the beauties of the capital with avidity, under the happy guidance of a friend who was both an artist and antiquarian.

We went, on a certain Sunday, to a concert, and I heard for the first time Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, of which my father used to say: "If the whole of music were to be destroyed and forgotten, and only one work left, that work ought to be the 'Ninth.' "

When I returned to Beaucourt I found my mother had started on the building of large, sumptuous and extremely expensive greenhouses. We begged her in vain to have the work stopped. My mother loved building, and, as she said herself: "Every human being has his disease. Your father's was loving to suffer. I have the 'stone' disease. I love bricks, cement, sand, stone. To build has become my passion and at my age, you don't get cured of your passions."

A few days later, my mother, somewhat anxious about my health, suggested that I should go to Bayonne with the Herrs, and spend a few weeks in the South.

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During the journey, they told me all kinds of wonderful things about M. Steinheil, to whom, they admitted, they had often spoken of me, and who was now in Bayonne, decorating the cathedral there.

At my sister's I was shown the photograph of the painter, a shortish man of at least forty, thin, with small eyes, a dark moustache, and a pointed beard. "No, thank you!" I exclaimed, "I'd never dream of marrying a man like that. Why, I'd look as though I were his daughter!"

I was, however, persuaded to meet him. One day, my sister said to me: "To-morrow, we'll go to Biarritz to have tea with some friends."

"All right," I replied, "while you are with your friends, I will play with my nieces on the sands."

The next day, just as we were going to board the narrow-gauge train which connects Bayonne with Biarritz, I saw my brother-in-law walk up to a small man, clean-shaven save for his moustache, and wearing a frock-coat that was far too long for him. I did not recognise him as the painter of the photographs. The two men came towards me and M. Herr introduced M. Steinheil to me. At that time I was still as frank and as impulsive as a child, and could not help remarking on the artist's changed appearance. Quite confused, he explained: "My beard was getting grey and I decided to shave it—yesterday."

In the train, my sister scolded me. "You have laughed at this poor M. Steinheil, and you have hurt his feelings. He is abnormally shy, but he is a charming fellow, a great artist, and the pupil of his uncle Meissonier whose talent you admire so much."

I rose and walked straight to M. Steinheil: "It appears I have hurt you," I said quite simply. "Please forgive me. You must not be angry. I always say what I think, and after all, what do I care whether you wear a beard or not!"

My sister, in despair, tugged at my skirt, but the painter said: "I admire your sincerity, Mademoiselle. Frank and impulsive people are becoming so rare nowadays."

He didn't please me at all.

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I saw M. Steinheil very often after this first, uneventful meeting. And then, one day, I was persuaded to go to the Cathedral to see him at work. His conversation interested me very much, but I could not help teasing him.

I had pictured him wearing a black velvet coat or in ordinary attire, but this is what I saw when I entered the Cathedral: a tiny man lost in a white smock, like a house-painter, holding a gigantic palette, and perched on the top of a huge scaffolding.

I burst out laughing in spite of the solemnity of the place. M. Steinheil wheeled round, saw us, dropped his brushes and his palette, which fell noisily on to the flagstones beneath, came down from the scaffolding at top speed, and, when he reached the ground, greeted me with a number of quick, jerky little bows, all of the same depth, just as I had seen President Carnot bow in Paris a few weeks before. Meanwhile, my little nieces and I were forcing our handkerchiefs in our mouths.

Disconcerted, M. Steinheil took off his smock . . . and we had a fresh surprise. I thought that underneath that smock he was dressed like any man, but no, he wore a thick knitted brown sweater over his waistcoat, and that sweater reached down to his knees and gave him a most comical appearance.

We went slowly round the Cathedral, and the painter described to me all the frescoes, those that were the work of his father and those he had himself just completed. He spoke about his father with such feeling that, remembering my own father, I became quite serious, and thenceforth listened with keen attention to all that M. Steinheil said.

Afterwards, we examined the stained glass windows. "That is a branch of art," he said, "to which I have devoted many months. My father was master of it, and handed me his secrets. There is, for instance, a certain antique red which he alone knew how to produce—and now I am the only person who knows. It was my father who restored the windows of Strasburg Cathedral and of that Gothic gem, the Sainte Chapelle in Paris." And with obvious joy he added: "The great Ruskin himself wrote about my father's windows in the Sainte Chapelle where the whole story of the Bible is painted: 'So well has M. Steinheil matched the colours that it is not

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easy to distinguish between the modern glass and the little that still remains of the thirteenth century.' "

I began gradually to be interested in the artist. . . . He came and dined with my sister and I tried to be more kind to him and promised I would never tease him when he spoke to me on art. . . . A few days later, M. Steinheil added himself to my list of suitors, which already included two officers, a barrister, a wealthy nobleman, a lecturer, and a stout manufacturer. I felt no affection for any of them, but it was undoubtedly with M. Steinheil that I preferred to talk. We chatted not only of art and of Paris, but of Beaucourt and my mother. He told me the story of his life, of his career . . . I heard he had "brought up" his sisters, and soon found that his timidity and reserve did not mean—far from it—a lack of intelligence and generous feelings.

He gave me painting lessons and spent more time at my sister's house than at the Cathedral. He became smarter in his dress: changed his necktie every day and shortened his frock-coat.

I was given to understand that he had intended to leave Bayonne for his home—at No. 6, Impasse Ronsin in Paris—eight days after my arrival. I remained six weeks in Bayonne, and he did not leave the town until the day after my departure. His friends chaffed him about this constantly protracted delay, but he replied with his usual far-away voice: "There is a fold in the cloak of my Saint Martin which is not yet finished." That never-completed fold almost became a proverb afterwards.

I returned to Beaucourt with my brother-in-law, and was overjoyed at being once more near my mother. . . . Alas, during my absence, she had not only gone on with the building of the great greenhouses, but had started upon a luxurious piggery, large enough for hundreds of pigs, and I heard she had been with an architect to an estate near Mulhausen, where she had inspected the famous model farm of a German prince, an exact replica of which she wanted to have built at Beaucourt.

Twice a week I received painting lessons by post. I sent

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my work to M. Steinheil, in Paris, and he returned it to me duly corrected and with pages of comment, which I eagerly read. The "Parisian painter," as my mother said, "had already a place in my thoughts."

Then, without warning, his letters ceased . . . after one in which he had mentioned that he was unwell.

In January 1890, my mother was visited by my aunt, Mme. Octave Japy, who brought a letter from M. Boch, an intimate friend of the Steinheils and the Meissoniers. In his letter M. Boch said, that after having seen how ill Adolphe (Steinheil) was, he had talked with the Steinheil family and had discovered that the painter "had no longer any desire to live," that he was desperately in love with Mlle. Japy, but dared not ask for her hand, as he knew only too well "that she would receive such a proposal with a shout of laughter." M. Boch's letter—which was handed to me—contained warm eulogies of M. Steinheil and ended as follows: "I should be glad to know whether Mlle. Japy might, some day, consent to become the wife of my old friend, or whether he must give up such hopes."

I was moved, but frankly told my mother that I had never seriously thought of M. Steinheil as a husband. Thereupon my aunt offered to go to Paris "to investigate things."

When she returned, she spoke of M. Steinheil, of his house, his position. Then, gaily, she confessed that she had been rather disconcerted when she had arrived at the villa in the Impasse Ronsin. "I found M. Steinheil," she exclaimed, "wearing a blue sweater and . . . wooden shoes. It was raining and he was about to walk across the garden to the studio of his brother-in-law who makes stained glass. . . . He was most sympathetic, however. . . . Of course he is furious that his little secret has been discovered. He loves you with all his heart and says he would do anything to make you happy. . . . I promised to talk to you and plead in his favour. I have done so."

I had several long talks with my mother and my aunt. . . . They both declared that happiness was far safer and lasting with a man of mature years than with the average young man. . . . And then, I wondered what my father would have

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thought of such a marriage, and it seemed to me that he would have approved of it. . . . M. Steinheil seemed grave and kind, two qualities which my father thought essential, and he was a talented artist, to which my father would certainly not have objected. Again, he used to tell me that an ideal married life is only possible when the husband and wife can be a good deal together. . . . Now M. Steinheil being a painter would spend much of his time at home, in his studio. . . . And then, the prospect of living in Paris appealed to me, as it did to every girl in our distant province. Finally, every one seemed in favour of that marriage . . .

Gradually, I saw this projected union in a new light; I grew used to the idea that I *might* become Mme. Steinheil, and at length I consented to meet the painter in Beaucourt.

He arrived a few days later, put up at my grandmother's, called on us every day and made the acquaintance of the whole family. He pleased every one, and his slow, serene and dignified ways, were in such perfect accord with my mother's character that she asked me how I could hesitate to marry such an ideal man. M. Steinheil's timidity was taken as the delightful sign of a deep love.

He was most attentive to me, spoke so convincingly, though without any passion—of the happiness that would be ours, and seemed so desperately anxious to hear me say "yes" after he had proposed, that I had not the heart to say "no."

Our engagement lasted four months, during which we exchanged letters that became longer and more frequent as the weeks passed by. Such noble feelings were expressed in his letters that I grew more and more happy at the thought of becoming the wife of Adolphe Steinheil.

Towards the end of June my fiancé reached Beaucourt with his family, whom I had met in Paris a few weeks before, when I had gone there with my mother to purchase my trousseau. M. Steinheil at once set to work on a portrait of me—a small oil-painting on wood—*á la* Meissonier, which was never to be completed. I was to discover later on, that my husband seldom went to the end of an idea or a plan, and was possessed of an unconquerable dread of all final decisions.

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Our marriage took place in July at the Beaucourt Temple —the dear temple where I had spent so many hours, including the most tragic one of my short life.

M. Steinheil was a Catholic, but had consented to our marriage being celebrated in a Protestant church and had also agreed that our children, if we had any, were to be brought up in the Protestant faith. The Japy family—all staunch Huguenots—had been most strict on this point.

Two days before the wedding, I received the following letter, which is worth mentioning, for it recalls a pretty tradition, which, like most pretty traditions, is on the wane or has already disappeared.

"BEAUCOURT, *July* 9, 1890.

"MADEMOISELLE,—On the occasion of your marriage, we have decided to meet you at the church-door in order to pay to you our compliments, according to custom.

"Pray accept, Mademoiselle, our heartiest good wishes, and believe in our most respectful feelings.

"For the Young People of Beaucourt, and by the request of the Organising Committee.

"EUGENE POMMIER."

On the day of my marriage, all the youths and maidens in the neighbourhood formed an aisle outside the church, and they held garlands of roses and ribbons to which turtle-doves were lightly attached. As I proceeded I broke the garlands and the flowers dropped on my white dress and were scattered on the ground, and the severed ribbons allowed the doves to escape, one after another, over my head. On the threshold of the church, one of the young men made a pretty speech and then, according to the old tradition stopped M. Steinheil and made him dash a glass to pieces—which is supposed to show that he renounces the joys of bachelordom. Next, the "head" of the delegation delivered a speech in which my future husband was duly told what a great honour Beaucourt conferred upon him in giving him as a bride one of its own demoiselles. Would he please bear this in mind, and also remember that they all relied upon him to make me "infinitely happy." . . .

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The Temple was decorated with foliage and flowers, and the floor was strewn with roses. These, I was told later on, were a present from the poor of the neighbourhood, who had wished to give a surprise—and I was not only surprised, but touched—to "her who had for many years helped her father to relieve their misery," and "who after the death of her beloved father, had done her best to continue his work of mercy." Those roses were indeed the most beautiful wedding-present I received.

The young ladies of Beaucourt sang a chorus. The words had been specially written by a local poet, young and full of excellent intentions, and the music composed by my father, years ago. My pastor, M. Bach, was so eloquent that I burst into sobs like every one else; and as we left the Temple, my husband and I were greeted by the strains of a warlike march played by the Beaucourt band, and we shook hands with the forty-five musicians whom for so many years, I had seen at home, at the rehearsals conducted by my father.

A reception followed, and I saw once more all the dear faces I loved, except, alas, that of my grand-papa from Russia . . . M. Doriand had been unable to leave Moscow, and I never heard from him or saw him again.

In my mother's brougham, my husband and I drove to the station where we entrained for Besançon, and thence we went on to Italy.

We were to remain there a month, but at the end of ten days, I felt so home-sick and depressed that we returned to Beaucourt, where I ran into my mother's arms and begged her to let me stay with her—for ever. My husband entreated me to come with him to Paris, and I followed him. . . .

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CHAPTER III

ARRIVAL IN PARIS. A SEPARATION. MARTHE. PARISIAN LIFE.

I SHALL never forget that arrival in Paris. It was on a Sunday morning, M. Steinheil had warned his sister when to expect us. He talked awhile with the concierge in the lodge, then joined me in the garden, where I was patiently waiting in the pouring rain, and said: "I am extremely sorry. My sister, I hear, has gone to mass, and she has the keys of the house. . ."

I spent half an hour in the lodge, distressed by the smell of fried onions which came from the kitchen. At last, Mlle. Marguerite Steinheil returned from church. She wore a morning dress which I would not have allowed my maid to wear. It was 9 A. M., and I felt hungry—in spite of the fried onions—but breakfast was not mentioned. I had a painful impression when I entered the house—my home. . . . The hall was very dusty; there was no carpet, and nothing was ready for the arrival of a young wife. I asked the way to my bedroom, and burst into tears.

Very tenderly, my husband tried to console me. Then he fetched the wedding-presents sent by his friends, dried my tears with his handkerchief, as one does to a crying child, and I partly forgot my sorrow.

Mlle. Steinheil lived with us. She was very affectionate, in her way, but abnormally old-fashioned. My husband was entirely under her domination and under that of all the other members of his family.

The next day I resolved to re-arrange the drawing-room, which was cold, dreary, and as unattractive as could be. I

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transformed the curtains, changed the position of the furniture, put flowers everywhere, placed here a *bergère*, there a pretty *chiffonnier*, there a Louis Seize arm-chair taken from the furniture which had been sent to me from Beaucourt, and everything I disliked I removed to my husband's vast studio.

Delighted at having arranged the salon to my taste I went and fetched Adolphe to show him what I had done. He was quite upset, and began by telling me: "It is rather awkward, all this furniture you have sent up to my studio, and curiously enough you have taken from the studio the very things I need for my pictures, as backgrounds, as ornaments."

At that moment my sister-in-law entered. She glanced around her, looked at her brother, and then, turning to me: "My dear little girl," she said, with an air of outraged piety, "never, you understand me, never has the furniture in this room been touched since the death of our venerated father." Her tone froze me to the marrow, and somewhat incensed me. At the same time I regretted that I had hurt the feelings of my sister-in-law and upset the backgrounds for my husband's paintings. . . .

I had to put everything back in its place. It was painful. I had succeeded in turning that old, solemn and utterly inhospitable room into a pretty and cosy salon, in which there reigned an attractive harmony of lines and colours. Alas, I had to rehang the paintings by Daubigny, Corot and Meissonier where I had found them, close to the frieze, where it was impossible to enjoy their beauty. I had to replace the pieces of furniture one beside the other along the walls, all in a row, and move back the piano into its dark corner. I had draped it with a marvellous and genuine Doge's gown, made of red velvet, which I had discovered in the studio. I took the gown back to the studio, and had to reinstate in their former places all the horrible things I had triumphantly relegated there. And I had to remove from the salon my pretty Louis XVI. furniture and replace the chairs that had been there, stiff, heavy, ungraceful chairs, with such high seats that one had to climb in order to sit on them, and to jump in order to come down.

With a sad heart I undid all my work. I took away the

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vases and their flowers, the cushions and embroideries I had strewn here and there to give touches of colour and a little life to this gloomy place. Evening was falling; I wanted to light the gas, but my sister-in-law gently but firmly decreed: "It's still light enough . . . and gas is expensive."

I sought a refuge in my room, and my husband followed me there. I begged him to allow me at least to furnish and decorate my own room as I pleased. He gladly consented. He was really grieved by what had taken place. "Be patient," he said; "everything will be all right later on. The main thing is not to be in a hurry."

He was forty; I was twenty. He was quiet, indifferent, easily satisfied, compared life to a disagreeable pill which every one must swallow. . . . My husband's philosophy did not appeal to me in the least.

And yet I loved him and believed in happiness. . . . And then, there were my mother's letters. She wrote to me almost every day at that time; and later, and until her tragic end, some twenty years after my marriage, not a week elapsed without my receiving from her, when she was not with me, one of those tenderly maternal letters which strengthen the mind, palliate sorrow, and rekindle the flame of hope in one's soul.

After a few days, when I realised that I had not to deal with deliberate opposition, but that, on the contrary, my huband and his sister were anxious to see me happy, although, being old-fashioned, they were in nature, habits and ideas far removed from me, I thought that with a great deal of affection and persuasion I would succeed in improving my husband. But the problem of Mlle. Steinheil looked to me more difficult.

I asked Adolphe: "How long do you think she will remain with us?"

"She has always lived near me," he replied timidly. "But I hope she will marry some day."

This reply made me leap with hope, and I thought: "I will find her a husband." I applied myself to the search with such goodwill that my efforts were crowned with success. Six months after my arrival in Paris, Mlle. Steinheil became the

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wife of a government official who made her perfectly happy. And when, later, I told her about my little ruse, she saw the humour of it and laughed, and expressed her gratitude in a manner both charming and sincere.

On the very day of her wedding, I celebrated what I called "my victory" by altering everything, not only in the drawing-room, but throughout the house, and turning it at last into the beautiful and comfortable nest I had so long dreamed of.

As a wedding-gift I presented my sister-in-law with the dear old furniture which she had forbidden me to touch, and I also sent her a collection of rococo-clocks and a group of wax flowers under glass shades, which she held sacred. But, as my father had once told me, "Love is illogical," and my sister-in-law carefully removed the dreary furniture, the elaborate clocks and the wax flowers . . . to the attic of her new home!

I loved my husband, and although I soon found out that his timidity, which I had taken for a lover's diffidence, was really the key-note of his character—that his restraint was weakness, that he had neither ambition nor courage, and that his ideal was tranquillity—I refused to believe that my love, my energy, my vitality, which every one said was contagious, would not in time conquer all obstacles, and that our married life was doomed and happiness impossible. I set to work and did all that an active wife can do for the husband she loves; and my task was the easier because it was the very essence of my nature to spend and devote myself to the service of others, and also because Adolphe, though he lacked will-power, was endowed with many admirable qualities both of the heart and mind.

I reorganised our home, tried to breathe ambition into my husband, cheered him when he was depressed, surrounded him with comfort and assisted him in his work, made the historical costumes which he needed for his models and sat for him myself. But I failed to rouse him from his apathy or to give him the love of effort. . . . And yet, to whom is effort more necessary than to the artist?

It was indeed pitiful, for Adolphe had genuine talent and could have made a great name for himself. But, besides

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working hard, he would have had to pay certain visits, take certain steps, and he would leave his studies only to take me to the houses of his friends or to hear me sing.

He often spoke to me about his uncle and master, Meissonier, but had ceased to call on him, after a little family misunderstanding, and Meissonier died without my having seen him.

Certain paintings by my husband looked so much like the work of his celebrated uncle that in America a number of "Steinheils" have been sold as "Meissoniers." Adolphe, like his master, painted miniatures in oil and used much the same kind of "subjects." He told me many anecdotes about his uncle, and here is one of them in his own words; "Meissonier was very small, smaller even than I am, and his diminutive stature was quite a trial to him. He came often to my studios and I believe he liked me chiefly because I am small. He would sit on my stool, examine a picture on which I was working, glance at my model, caress his long white beard and say, 'It's fine . . . but somehow, I don't see things as you do. There seems to be something wrong with the perspective. . . . Oh! I have it. I forgot you are so very small. I must stoop in order to see like you. Give me a lower stool. . . .' And he chuckled with glee."

In days gone by Meissonier and Louis Steinheil (my husband's father) had worked and struggled together. Then Geoffroy Dechaume, who was to sculpture so many wonderful statues for Notre-Dame in Paris and the Strasburg Cathedral, joined the two friends, and the trio toiled and lived together in one room. Meissonier married the sister of Louis Steinheil. Louis Steinheil became the father of a large family and devoted his attention chiefly to stained-glass painting, which was then very well paid for—a special branch of art which my husband also took up for a time.

I soon became acquainted with the majority of well-known painters and sculptors in France. Among others, I often visited Bartholdi in his studio. The sculptor of the colossal statue of "Liberty illuminating the World," on Bedloe's Island in New York Harbour, was an old friend of my husband.

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He was a man of keen intellect and had much originality of thought, but his conceit was as colossal as his famous statue. Showing me once the small model of "Liberty," he said quietly: "The Americans believe that it is Liberty that illumines the world, but, in reality, it is my genius."

I never met a man quite as naturally and unconsciously conceited, excepting perhaps a certain Orientalist, who was as learned as he was celebrated. I remember meeting him once at the *Institut*. He wore the green uniform and the sword of a member of the *Institut*, and on his breast there shone a mass of orders. He pointed one out to me with his parchment-like forefinger, "You see this little thing here," he whispered. "There are but three Europeans who have the right to wear it —one emperor, one king and—myself. . . . I don't attach the slightest importance to it." And, leaving me, he went off to tell exactly the same thing to all who stopped to listen to him.

I met Gounod, who came several times to the Impasse Ronsin, and I sang with the old composer a duet of his of which he was very fond, entitled "D'un cœur qui t'aime." Once he played to me many pages of his "Rédemption," the sacred trilogy which he had dedicated to Queen Victoria. I did not know him very long, for he died in 1893 at Saint Cloud, where, two years later, another great man, Pasteur, was to die.

I also met Ferdinand de Lesseps, *le grand Français*. He was eighty-seven then and very weak. I never knew a man whose kindness and modesty equalled that of this giant, who had given the world the Suez Canal.

Eleven months after my marriage my daughter was born and I nearly lost my life. The birth of my child was a source of pure delight to me, and I forgot all my worries and bitter disappointments. My happiness, however, was short-lived. For a reason which I will not reveal, and at which I will not even hint, I determined to divorce. I consulted on the matter M. B., my husband's closest friend, a famous barrister and Attorney-General. He advised me to go to Beaucourt with my baby, and not to make an irrevocable decision. Twice a week

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during the many months I spent at Beaucourt with my mother, I received letters from the Attorney-General, and their burden was always the same: "Come back to Paris and to him. Forgive . . . We will all do our best to make your life a happy one. Don't divorce, for your child's sake. . . ." My mother, who was indulgence incarnate and had a holy terror of divorce, gave me similar advice, and one day I returned home, had a long and painful conversation with my husband, in which it was agreed that, for the love of little Marthe, we wouldn't divorce, and would henceforth be "friends," each living in his or her own way. M. Steinheil, later on, said to an intimate friend, who repeated the remark at my trial, "My wife is only a friend to me; she has full liberty, and I don't control her actions. . . ." It was further agreed that when we would have to discuss some matter of importance we would do so in writing. Thanks to this method, no one ever guessed that, although living under one roof, my husband and I were separated. Indeed, this way of discussing by letter had many advantages, and even the most united couples should adopt it. It helps you to avoid bitter, hurtful words, prevents quarrelling, and servants cannot overhear. . . . Moreover, it often happens that while reading over a letter you have just written, you grow calm and realise the futility and uselessness of what you said. The letter is torn to pieces, and common sense comes, smiling, on the scene. . . .

Notwithstanding the separation, I continued to do all that I could for my husband. I looked after the house and assisted him in his work just as I had done before. But need I say that my dream of love and happiness was hopelessly shattered, and that had it not been for my little Marthe my life would have been almost unbearable.

It has often been said that an unsuitable match or the failure of her conjugal happiness urges any intelligent or sensitive woman on towards adventures and new interests, and leads her to live on illusions. I do not believe that I ever deluded myself with chimeras, except, perhaps, in the days when my father built up around me a real and yet fairy world of ideal joys, but there is no doubt that after I had shaken off the dejection

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which weighed upon me like a heavy and unbearable cloak, I realised that in order to live at all I would have to occupy my mind, find an outlet for my energy, and seek new interests everywhere. I was quite incapable of dumb resignation. With me, to strive and accomplish has always been a necessity. I clearly saw that I should live only if I lived intensely, ardently, even feverishly, and had more to do every day than I possibly could do. I took a passionate interest in people, in things, in events; I studied music, art, even politics; and my life from that time belonged to my daughter and to society.

Without clearly realising what was taking place in me and in my home, my friends instinctively showed me renewed sympathy, especially M. B., the Attorney-General. He called almost every day, read to me, filled my mind with new ideas, introduced all kinds of interesting people to me, and created around me an atmosphere which, although artificial, had a wonderful fascination, and made me almost forget all that I wanted so much to forget.

My husband and I often spent evenings in his salon, where scores of magistrates and famous barristers gathered. It was there that I met an extremely beautiful and elegant woman, surrounded by an eager circle of admirers, and her husband, who paid me many commonplace compliments. I afterwards met them in many drawing-rooms. The man was M. Trouard Riolle, and was to be, years afterwards, the Public Prosecutor at my trial. He struck me as an extremely well-groomed and boring *poseur*, who seemed to think that every woman at once fell in love with him, and that directly he was introduced any glance or remark of his would fascinate her. I soon saw that he was an ambitious and scheming man. His wife, the daughter of the head of the Havas Agency, was as wealthy as she was beautiful.

From one drawing-room I went to another, and very soon I knew what is usually called *le Tout-Paris*.

Among the many able men I met who paid their addresses to me none was more sympathetic to me than M. B., and I was gradually conquered by this Attorney-General's eloquence, his refinement, which reminded me of M. Doriand's exquisite

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courtesy, his self-control, and his capable and masterly way of dealing with affairs, which contrasted so impressively with the attitude of too many of the men whom I saw around me, lounging lazily and carelessly through life. He was tall and fair, wore side whiskers, and had small, shrewd, and sensuous eyes; he was a witty *causeur*, on whose words every one hung fascinated. People were anxious to be admitted to his salon, and he was a great favourite, especially with women, for although he was inevitably *blasé*, he had still that natural and romantic charm which very soon wins a woman to its owner.

I entertained a great deal, gave parties, concerts, dinners. I held a reception once a week, and between two and seven three to four hundred persons would pass through the salons of the villa in the Impasse Ronsin. There came statesmen and diplomatists, famous authors and famous composers, generals and admirals, scientists and officials, business magnates and great financiers, State-councillors, explorers, men with historic names, men who were making names for themselves, and judges, a whole body of judges. . . .

And there were the opera, charity bazaars, visits to the poor of my district, chamber music, private theatricals, hunting, the Salons, the *grande semaine*, first nights, concerts, receptions at various Embassies and at the Elysée. . . . And there came every year a stay at Biarritz or on the Riviera, a month or two at the seaside. . . . And there was my husband's work, and the work I did with him . . . and music . . . and, above all, my daughter, my little Marthe. . . .

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CHAPTER IV.

MY SALON

My drawing-room was a room about 60 feet by 30, and 18 feet high. One entered it from the verandah by doors which, when folded back, made one room of the two. At the far end there was a monumental and ancient chimney-piece of carved wood; on either side of it were cabinets filled with cameos, rare china and silver. The furniture was chiefly Louis XV. and XVI. On the left stood an organ and various stringed instruments, and on the right a grand piano. On the walls hung huge seventeenth-century Gobelins illustrating the story of Judith, Ashuerus and Holofernes, and framed with the classic fruit-and-flower border. I need hardly say that palms and flowers were everywhere in evidence. The salon communicated with the dining-room by a wide opening, so that several hundred persons could easily be entertained.

The Parisian life, brilliant and exhausting, strenuous and artificial, was above all intoxicating, and I needed such intoxication. . . . The wit, the culture, the taste, the flights of fancy of so many men and women around me, their enthusiasms, their sympathy, their conversations, their qualities, and even their defects, became necessary to me.

Life could not be dull with these companions, whatever their ideas and their habits or their hobbies.

There was, for instance, old M. H., a distinguished author and a man of the world, who had lived under three kings, one Emperor, and two Republics, and whom my mother called "a living encyclopædia." He was small, a dandy, whose love of detail in attire would have excited the envy of a D'Orsay or a

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Brummell. He was as careful of his appearance as a professional beauty, in spite of his age. His curly white hair was extremely well kept. He wore spotless white spats all the year round, and always had a flower in his button-hole: Parma violets in winter and a pale pink carnation in summer. He had one curious mania—he visited cemeteries. We frequently went together to the Père Lachaise and to his favourite Montmartre cemetery.

"The Père Lachaise," he exclaimed, "possesses the tombs of Musset, Balzac, Chopin, La Fontaine, Bizet, of your 'friends' Cuvier and Thiers, and others, but it is too fashionable, too showy . . . In Montmartre there is more intimacy: one seems to recall, to see the dear dead better. We have Mürger and Offenbach here, Renan and Gautier, Lannes—which means Austerlitz, Jena, Friedland—and Berlioz and Greuze, Madame, the exquisite Greuze who had a wretched wife, but how beautiful she was! . . . And they represent what is best in France, those men—heroism and wit, subtle art, deep thought and clear language, logic and method, inspiration and recklessness . . . And that is typically French, Madame, or I am an old fool!"

M. H. had known intimately Victor Hugo and Berlioz, "the Victor Hugo of music." But whom had he not known, this artistic and lettered old man! He had met Madame Récamier, a year or two before her death. "She was ill, old, and wagged her head. The Vicomte de Chateaubriand—who had only a few weeks more to live—sat near her in an arm-chair, his knees wrapped in a huge rug. He talked to her about himself. That was ever his favourite topic of conversation. He was, at the same time, wearied of everything and almost of himself. Madame Récamier was still good to look upon and had a noble bearing. The oval of her face was pure and her shoulders had retained their beautiful curve. I was twenty then; she was seventy and nearly blind, and although she spoke very little, I could have loved to spend long hours in the company of this woman who had once held the sceptre of perfect loveliness."

As a child, he had witnessed the first performance of Victor Hugo's *Hernani*. "We were all frantic . . . Mlle. Mars took the part of Doña Sol. I have seen scores of actresses in the

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rôle since, but none, save Sarah Bernhardt, ever equalled Mlle. Mars in that romantic part. . . ." Old M. H. had been on the best of terms with Mlle. Rachel. "It was a delirious and . . . expensive friendship," he explained. "Rachel loved love, and loved gold."

There had been many strange romances in M. H.'s adventurous career, but he had remained an optimist and fondly hugged all his memories; and as he sometimes put it, in his flowery language, after a good dinner: "I have gathered as many roses as possible, Madame, in the gardens of Cypris."

There was the Comte de B. who, like M. H., loved life, but thought that France had lost the secret of the art of living. He had been young in the days of Napoleon the Third and was never tired of describing the dazzling days of the Second Empire. He had known them all: the Duke de Morny, the Duchess de Talleyrand, the Princesse de Metternich, Lafitte the banker, Marie Sasse the opera singer, D'Orsay the dandy, La Païva and other ladies fair and frail. He described fantastic parties, games at lansquenet when fortunes were made, and lost, the expedition to Rome, the Italian campaign, the war in Mexico; and he would rhapsodise delightfully on the beauty of the Empress Eugénie, the fascinations of her Court, and the unparalleled festivities at Saint Cloud and at the "Château," as the Tuileries were then called.

Among the people I received there were frivolous and worthless men who were at the same time witty, refined, and highly cultivated. Paris is the home of paradox. There were, for instance, M. X., an apparently sedate and worthy Minister of State, not without ability, who did not hesitate to disguise himself, even donning wigs and false moustaches, on his nocturnal expeditions to cheap haunts of so-called pleasure; M. T., a famous banker, who had his house so built that he could entertain fifty friends to a bacchanalian orgy without his wife knowing, although she was only on the other side of the wall.

There were women who were fascinating without being either beautiful or clever, and able women whose superior nature, talent, or even genius, it took weeks to realise.

Of the men, some cared only for costly things and extrava-

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gant pleasures; others, of a keener sensibility, saw deeper into life, but they too often spoke too little. And now and again there would come to the house a prophet, a self-styled magician, or a real intellectual giant.

Among the hosts of women I knew, there were many whose sole ambition seemed to be of becoming a queen of *colifichets*, as though their ideal model was Pauline Borghese. I knew two ladies, for instance, one the elderly wife of an eminent magistrate, and the other a wealthy society belle, who spent at least ten out of the fourteen hours during which they were awake in enhancing their beauty . . . and yet both were indeed beautiful!

A remarkable number of those who came to my house unburdened their hearts to me, whether I wished it or not. I heard dreadful secrets from excited ladies, and also confessions that were merely laughable, although the fair sinners thought otherwise, and seemed to enjoy the artificial atmosphere of danger, adventure, and terror into which they thought they had plunged with sublime recklessness, in order to satisfy their craving for new sensations.

A man of fifty, otherwise sane, clever, and reasonable, once spent three months in besieging my drawing-room, in the hope of finding me alone. At length he asked me, with the greatest secrecy . . . what he should do in order to become a member of the *Cercle de l'Union*, the aristocratic club which in former days had been adorned by the presence of the great Talleyrand. I confessed to him in the same trusted and secret tones that I did not move in exalted and exclusive circles! He had no sense of humour, at the time, and proceeded to ask me whether I thought he had any chances of being made a member of the "Jockey." And he kindly informed me that de Morny, Napoleon III.'s "right-hand" man, had belonged to that club . . . He left my drawing-room in despair, and a few weeks later, I heard he had become a member of the *Nouveau Cercle*, the favourite haunt of the *jeunesse dorée*, and of the Automobile Club de France. Perhaps he thought that two accessible clubs were as good as one exclusive club.

Many foreigners came to the Impasse Ronsin, but I found that the French had the most enthusiasm, spontaneity and

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ter and his mother. A monumental staircase decorated with frescoes painted by Puvis de Chavannes led to the artist's rooms, and above, to the studio crowded with old carved wood, magnificent bronzes by Barye, and a number of fine paintings —including one by his beloved Botticelli—on the walls.

Bonnat—above all a portrait painter—had a curious way of working. He hardly worked at his model—directly. He preferred to watch him, or her, in a round hand-mirror which he held in his left hand—the hand which also held the palette. At the back of the studio stood a small cheval-glass, placed in such a position that it reflected the portrait. He watched both images, and . . . worked. Another curious method of his was to turn the canvas when he retouched this or that detail.

Bonnat worked in silence. He did not think it necessary to make his model talk so as to get at his, or her, "psychology," but was satisfied with painting what he saw. In this, he reminded me of Rodin, the greatest sculptor since Michel-Angelo, whom I once heard say: "The artist cannot improve upon nature, and Life is Beauty."

Bonnat, energetic and wiry, believed in work, work, work—which, by the way, is also Rodin's motto—and achieved wonderful portraits, although I am aware that the pointillists, the cubists, the post-impressionists, and the post-post-impressionists hold other views!

He had "his" arm-chair in my drawing-room, and would sit there for hours, listening to the music or watching my guests, and rarely opening his lips. He was fond of Marthe, always had his pockets full of "surprises" for her, and often took her to his studio, where she loved to gaze at his beautiful collection of butterflies, with which she held long, mysterious conversations.

One day, when I came to sit for my portrait, Marthe, who had taken a long walk with me in the Bois, and whose cheeks, rosy from the outside air, threw into relief her dark brown eyes, sat down on the blue satin gown which I wore in the picture, and which my maid had just brought. Bonnat saw Marthe, and said to her, "Don't move, little one, I must paint you just as you are." In a few seconds, there was a canvas on his easel,

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BONNAT, BY HIMSELF

"Your Old, Devoted 'Grand-Father'"

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his hand held the usual mirror, and—he was at work. In less than an hour, he had painted Marthe, and the likeness was so perfect and speaking, that I cried: "Stop! Don't touch your work. Don't alter or add anything! Not a stroke more!"

Alas, Bonnat persisted in perfecting his work. Then he found that the canvas was not large enough. . . . Marthe was "cut" across the middle of her skirt. . . . There was too much "air" above the head, and too little at the sides. . . . He would have the canvas enlarged.

But when it was returned to him, he did not like the seams, and precipitately painted out the picture.

I came with my mother and Marthe to see my child's masterful portrait and to sit for mine. When we found that the picture had been destroyed, my mother cried with rage; I shed tears of disappointment. And when I told my old friend that he might have kept the bust only, and cut the picture in a suitable oval, he was as sorry as we all were. That day I had not the heart to sit, nor did Bonnat have the heart to paint!

I spent many delightful hours in that studio. Bonnat asked me to decorate and arrange it to my taste, for he knew full well the intense joy I had in handling beautiful or rare things, and how keen was my love of proportion, harmony, and colour-schemes. . . .

The painter, who was my husband's friend as well as mine, was one of the few men aware that we were not as happy as we appeared or pretended to be. He knew that often in Society, masks, more or less transparent, are worn by husbands and wives, and he did his best to give us those joys and interests which add so much to life, especially when the mainspring is broken and the machine has to be kept going as best it can.

Bonnat was kind to all, especially to poor artists. I once spoke to him about a young and unsuccessful painter who believed in his genius and, what is worse, had made another share his delusions; a poor little girl to whom he gave his unknown name and who gave him her love and—several children. I did my utmost to relieve their misery, and then wrote and asked Bonnat to examine the young man's work.

I went to the studio in the Rue Bassano shortly afterwards.

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"Well, what is it like?" I asked.

"Nothing in it so far," Bonnat replied. "Why on earth does the fellow paint? The only way of saving him is to make him give up Art and adopt some other profession. Will you send him to me one of these days?"

"He's downstairs, waiting. . . ." And I ran away before my old friend could exclaim his usual "Just like you!"

Bonnat questioned the young painter about his parents and heard that they were farmers. In his entertaining way he spoke of Nature, country-life, the simple life. . . . "And do you really think," he exclaimed in conclusion, "that if it were not for the Institute, the Council of the Legion d'Honneur, the Ecole des Beaux Arts, of which I am the director, and a score of other Societies and Committees to which I belong, I would remain here one single hour longer. No, sir! And you should consider yourself as a lucky dog. If I were free, as you are, I would go and live in my dear Saint-Jean-de-Luz, near the sea and near the Pyrenees, and breathe, and work. . . . As for painting, it is a wonderful thing, fascinating, ideal, sublime and all that, and I am rather fond of it myself, but there's no living in it unless you made a name for yourself forty years ago, as I did, for people liked good and beautiful things in those days, and paid for them. . . . If I were you, I'd paint what I pleased—in my leisure, and adopt some simple profession to earn my living. Ask your father to let you help him on his farm, and if you send me a picture every year and it's good enough, I'll try to get it accepted at the Salon. . . . By the way, do you care for a good cigar?"

"Rather," said the young painter, who although born in the country had spent several years in Montmartre.

"Well, then, my lad, take this box with you." And Bonnat dismissed him in the blunt manner which he assumed whenever he did a good action.

I saw the young man a few days later, before his departure for the country, where he was to become a prosperous farmer, though he never gave up painting, and he told me, with big tears in his eyes, that he had found in the box, besides the

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cigars, ten hundred-franc notes, and Bonnat's card with these words, "Good Luck."

"How shall I thank M. Bonnat," he kept repeating, after I had filled him with tea and cakes so that he might recover.

"I'll tell you," I replied. "By not thanking him at all He loathes gratitude."

Massenet, the composer of *Manon*, *Thaïs*, *Sapho*, *Werther*, and so many other delightful operas, did me, for many years, the great honour of calling himself my "respectful, obedient, and faithful accompanist." I always found him whimsical, enthusiastic, mischievous, and fond of jokes. As he entered my salon, at some crowded reception, he would wave aside the valet about to announce his name, and shout in a stentorian voice: "Massenet!" . . . Once, he added, "Grand officer of the legion of honour, author of a score of operas, member of several academies!" And as soon as he had greeted me and shaken hands with a few friends, he started his favourite sport: pun-making. He had a knack of ending the most serious arguments, even about music, with a *bon mot*, and I sincerely believe that he enjoyed the successes of his witticisms quite as much as the success of his operas. He said himself: "I am a composer, that's true and I can't help it, but at the same time I love fun and youth, and boys of sixty are incorrigible."

Once, some foreigners called on me, and Massenet begged me to mumble his name when I should introduce him. A little later, he was talking music to the newcomers, and in time mentioned Massenet, whose music he lightly disparaged, with the result that they agreed with him, as he seemed to know all about music, and even went further and declared Massenet's music quite unbearable. Thereupon the composer sat at the piano and played some of his own music as he alone could play it, and Massenet's critics went into ecstasies. "Ah, that's what one may call real music," they said. "Who wrote it?"

"A friend of mine," Massenet replied airily, and he played again, saying when he had concluded, "That was my own."

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"It's perfectly sweet. You ought to have your music printed."

"I occasionally do."

"Really! Would you mind repeating your name, we didn't quite catch it!"

"Massenet," and with infinite good grace the composer handed his card, and left the room in order to have his laugh outside.

His letters were most amusing. They were interspersed with bars of music and "sketches" to emphasise or illustrate his meaning. And they invariably contained some welcome remark about his work: "I have just left the Opera Comique. I am quite done up, but the interpretation at this rehearsal was splendid; singers, orchestra, everything. And Calvé! She's divine . . . Ah! The fourth act, you will see what she makes of it! . . ." But long before his letters reached me, Massenet came himself, although "done up," and played to me that fourth act, and made me sing it . . . under the eyes of my mother and of Marthe, wrapped in ecstasy! Massenet worshipped my daughter and always perched the darling on the top of the piano, where he played.

In order that Marthe might accompany me, he had the charming idea of composing a few songs for me, the accompaniments of which were very simple and easy and without octaves, which were as yet beyond her reach. On the day when she played the first of these "Do not give thy heart," Massenet indulged in an orgy of puns and jokes, which was a sign of perfect contentment.

Francois Coppée, an old comrade of my husband's and one of my "faithful," as he called himself, lived close to us and often came in to have a chat, to look at the flowers in my "winter garden" or to listen to music.

One day, when Reyer, the composer of *Sigurd* was present, he remarked that music was not only the most sociological and popular of arts, it was also the easiest. "I could not play a chord, but I feel sure that it is easier to express one's self in music than in written words. . . ."

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Reyer decreed: "It is quite as difficult to frame a melody as to frame a sonnet." But Coppée refused to believe it, and going to the piano, he struck a note mightily. "That's a war-cry," he exclaimed; then touched the same note gently, "And that's melancholy," and playing it once more as softly as possible, "And that's reverie: Music is above all wonderful because it is so simple!" It was a mere sally on his part, and Reyer laughed heartily.

Coppée was kind, tender-hearted, and sociable, the very type of the popular and sentimental *Parnassien*. He spoke in an artless manner, as much like a Christian as a poet, and the modesty of this *Academicien*, this "immortal" loaded with honours, was delightful.

He found me one evening reading some verses of Heredia. "You are unfaithful to me, dear friend," he said.

"I like all good poets," I replied, "and this one opens wide horizons to me. He seems very far . . ."

"You are right. I merely try to see what is near me," said Coppée with a smile.

Little Marthe was very proud of the poet, but this did not prevent her from making use of him. She made him gather shells for her, one summer, on a small beach in Normandy, and told him to store them in his large felt hat. It was there that he once took us to a huge rock in a secret hole of which he showed me a large box of cigarettes.

"The doctor strictly forbids me to smoke," he explained, "and my sister (Coppée was a bachelor and lived with his sister, who was the most devoted person one could well conceive) sees to it that the doctor's instructions are carried out. Therefore, I come here secretly to smoke. Life without tobacco, you know . . ." Then taking me to the other side of the rock, he pointed to the sand which was strewn with hundreds of cigarette ends, and cheerfully exclaimed: "What a cemetery!"

Marthe, who was then seven years old, had often heard that Coppée was a great man, and that all which came from a great man was worth keeping. While we walked on, Coppée and I, she gathered all the cigarette ends, hid them, and the next

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day, put them in a box which she would not let out of her hands. Coppée, later on questioned her about the precious contents of the box. . . . He believed, as I did, that it contained sea-shells, and he was very much tickled when she opened the box, and in her little fluty voice, declared: "I too want to have a keepsake from you, and I have it!"

In Paris I often saw Coppée as I passed by the Café des Vosges, his favourite haunt, a few hundred yards away from the Impasse Ronsin. He saluted me, quickly paid the waiter, overtook me, and together we walked to my house, talking of books.

He himself organised a performance at my villa of his *Passant*, the charming one-act play which had made him famous when he was twenty-seven, and still a clerk in the Ministry of War.

During the Dreyfus affair, in which he took a leading part as one of the founders of the Patrie Française League, I saw him less and less. Meeting him one morning in the gardens of the Luxembourg, I asked him why he neglected me.

"Ah! my friend," he said hesitatingly, "I'd love to call on you as in the past, but the trouble is there are too many Dreyfusards in your salon!"

By an amusing coincidence, Zola called that very day, but he only remained a little while.

"To my great regret, I must go, Madame." And he added in a low, confidential voice: "The fact is there are too many Anti-Dreyfusards here."

The author of the Roujon-Macquarts was manly and brave besides being an able if unsympathetic novelist, but he had, to my knowledge, one little failing: he disliked talent in others, and one weakness: he was a gourmet. Therefore on the two or three occasions when he dined with us, I arranged a menu which Brillat Savarin would have endorsed and took care not to invite any other writer.

Zola lacked in conversation what he lacked in his writing: delicacy, refinement, lightness. He was heavy, ponderous and rather aggressive.

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I teased him one day: "How is the chase after human documents going on?" I asked.

"Quite well, Madame. I hunt my quarry everywhere, and all day long. Human documents, slices of life, searching character-studies, that is all there is in literature."

"But what of the writer's personality? Is that of no account whatever?"

"It shouldn't be. I try to eliminate my personality from my books. . . ."

"And don't you succeed?" I asked.

"I have the misfortune of being possessed of a temperament which I cannot altogether get rid of, alas!" came the pompous reply.

Another time, after re-reading "La Terre," I told him "You are a pessimist, M. Zola! You see only one side of life, the ugly and animal side; and but one kind of people . . . the bad kind. And to cap it all, you exaggerate. You believe yourself a 'realist,' but as a matter of fact, you are an idealist . . . with an ugly ideal!"

It was very evident that Zola was not pleased. Without relenting, however, I went on: "I have lived in the country for many, many years. I assure you that our peasants round Beaucourt and Belfort bear very little likeness to the brutes you describe. I have loved the peasants . . . "

"And I, Madame," Zola retorted severely, "I have observed them."

That night, after my guest's departure, I did not go on with "La Terre," but refreshed my mind by reading, for the twentieth time, "Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard" and felt extremely thankful to Anatole France.

I remember an Argentine mine-owner whose ambition was to meet celebrities. He saw Zola and said to me: "What! Is this the man who wrote 'L'Assommoir,' 'Nana,' 'Germinal' . . . this little insignificant person! I had fancied him looking somewhat like Beethoven, clean-shaven, with a powerful face, a tremendous brow, glowing eyes and a mane. . . ."

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Zola overheard the remark and smiled. He rightly appreciated that kind of indirect compliment.

I happened to meet Zola on a day following one of his defeats at the election of the French Academy. A young man, pallid and very nervous but full of good intentions, said to the great writer as if to console him: "Maître, what does it matter? . . . After all, not even Pascal or Molière or Balzac was made a member of the Academy."

Zola did not reply, but a little later, when cups of tea and "petits-fours" were being handed round, he began to describe the Morgue in an even more realistic and harrowing manner than in "Thérèse Raquin"! . . . And as he spoke, his eyes were riveted on the tactless young man, who turned livid and trembled.

Had Zola taken into account the importance of political influence in the Academical elections—as in everything else in France—he would probably have become an "Immortal." At any rate, few writers were even more worthy of a seat under the *Coupole*.

I spent pleasant hours at the Institute. I was present at the receptions of Anatole France who obtained the seat of M. de Lesseps and of Edmond Rostand, by M. de Voguë, and at a few more of these ceremonies which play such an important part in the literary and social life of Paris. I have always felt a deep sympathy with the *récipiendaires*, whatever their degree of literary merit. For even though a man may have written books which the world will hasten to forget, that is no reason why he should be compelled to listen in public, and for an hour, to a colleague's eulogies. What an ordeal and excessive cruelty when the *récipiendaire* happens really to deserve the panegyric! . . . It is positively painful to the least sensitive onlooker. The ladies, however, suffer the least, for their attention is naturally divided between the speeches and the display of new frocks and hats . . . an Academical Reception having long been a recognised occasion for the exhibition of the "latest creations."

Pierre Loti once described to me the mixed feelings of a *récipiendaire* in a way that would have made any nervous

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writer almost tremble at the thought that the Academy might some day elect him against his will.

Our conversation took place at the wedding of one of my cousins, the bridegroom being a relation of Loti's. The melancholy author of so many evocations, of so many exotic idyls, spoke well, but in a hollow, monotonous voice.

A concert was given after the wedding and a Breton sang several of his pieces: sailor-songs, excessively strong and free.

Loti, the naval officer, and Loti, the author of "Pêcheurs d'Islande," was carried away, and turning to me, he said: "Isn't my friend wonderful! As you listen to him, you can see the swelling ocean, you can feel the sea-breeze in your face . . ."

"Yes, and you can even taste the brine, smell the musty fish and . . . feel sea-sick!" I added, for some of the details in the song really gave one qualms.

Loti was not pleased, and to make amends I spoke about those books of his which I preferred, the "Roman d'un Spahi," "Mon Frère Yves," and "Propos d'Exil." And, as we talked, we travelled together to the Far East, and landed on an island in the South Seas, whereupon, using that gift that perhaps he alone among living men possesses, he began to describe the music and colour and even the fragrance of tropical nature with such magical power and subtlety that my senses were dazzled and bewitched. . . .

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CHAPTER V.

MY SALON (*continued*)

Amongst the "faithful," I must not forget to mention Henner, "the great painter of the flesh," as he called himself in one of his rare poetical moments.

Henner was dumpy, coarse-featured, and almost bald; had a shaggy grey beard, and ever-begrimed hands, and wore the shabbiest and greasiest of clothes. And it came as a shock to hear this old man, unspeakably unkempt and slovenly, talk with the worst Alsatian accent about the Beauty of the Nude, and the splendour of woman, which he did in a very matter-of-fact and unpoetical manner. But besides being a great artist, he was kind, honest and simple-hearted, like his old friend Bonnat.

The painter of "Chaste Susanna," "The Magdalene," and "The Levite of the Tribe of Ephraïm," enjoyed nothing better than a good dinner and old Burgundy.

I was a little apprehensive when he called, for the spoilt old child could not help speaking his mind bluntly. I was once begged by an acquaintance to use my influence to make the painter accept an invitation which had been extended to him several times. The aged bachelor, who disliked all functions save good dinners in congenial and familiar surroundings, accepted, after a great deal of coaxing. He arrived late, as usual, and unkempt, as usual. He had broken his stud, after having fidgeted with it for a long time, for there were very evident marks of a struggle in the centre of his shirt front. He saw me at once and instead of going straight to the hostess he rushed up to me and exclaimed: "Why didn't you tell me

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you were coming too; I should never have hesitated to accept?" Then, turning to the host, he said: "Well, well, and so you are the famous M. H. . . . who made your fortune years ago by selling shirts. I suppose if I made a sketch of you, you'd pay me with a dozen collars. I am told you own a fine art gallery here. I daresay you got all those modern pictures in exchange for shirts and hosiery, eh?" And he burst out laughing.

The tactless surmise happened to be correct. As a matter of fact, M. H. had once called on my husband and abruptly proposed to supply him for life with shirts and collars in exchange for a certain painting which he fancied. I tried not to be angry. "My husband," I said, "wears only the very best shirts . . ."

"I quite understand that."

"And he gives them away when he has worn them once . . ."

M. H. saw his mistake and withdrew the offer.

I never knew Henner to be embarrassed. We treated him like a member of the family, and, one day, wishing to make him understand that his nails were really too grimy, I asked him whether he wished to wash his hands before dinner.

He looked at his nails, understood, and quietly said: "I am in mourning for Alsace and Lorraine."

But if he were never embarrassed, he had embarrassing habits, the worst of which was that of examining the shoulders and arms of ladies in *décolleté* with unperturbed insistence. And not infrequently he would say: "Allow me, just one second; I want to feel the grain, the quality of your skin." And before the victim had time to move he would press down his hairy and grimy forefinger on her bare arm, or even on her neck.

Withdrawing his fingers, he would pass some such remark as this: "It's really wonderful. I never grow tired of feeling flesh. . . . It is all made of little dots—blue, white, green, pink, purple, yellow . . . that is what flesh is."

Countess S., a handsome lady of the Hungarian aristocracy, who had come to Paris on her honeymoon, raved about Henner's art. Meeting him one day in my house, she offered

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to sit for the painter. Her French was not fluent, and she meant, of course, that Henner should paint her portrait. He readily accepted, for her complexion was milky and transparent, and her hair had that glowing copper tint which he loved so much.

A few days later I met the fair Hungarian Countess.

"How is the portrait?"

"Don't speak about it," she replied. "Your Henner is a wretch. I went to his studio with my husband. Henner said to me quickly: 'Please undress.' Then, as if he were talking to himself, he added: 'Her body stretched on the black velvet of this couch, her hair loose . . . and a dark background. . . . It's going to be a masterpiece!' My husband was mad with rage. . . . At last M. Henner saw his mistake. He had only seen my hair and my complexion, and had not stopped to think whether I were a lady or a model. He apologised profusely, and offered to paint my portrait in any dress I chose, but my husband would not listen to him. . . ."

He made a joke once of which he was very proud. Having been asked who were his favourite composers, he replied: "There are two, and they have the same name. When I want serious music I ask for some Sebastian Bach, and when I want gay music I ask for some Offen-bach!"

Henner adored music. He said so, at least. But music is usually played after dinner, and after dinner, Henner retired to the smoking room in the company of a glass of brandy, and soon went to sleep. The noise of the instruments being tuned woke him up, and he came rushing into the drawing-room shouting: "Bravo, bravo; Ach. . . . What a nice piece that was." And he added: "And now that I have heard this masterpiece, I must retire. I have had a good dinner, I have heard excellent music, I have met charming people, and I am going away very pleased . . ." And the dear old man disappeared.

I often compare him to my friend Julius Oppert, the world famous Assyriologist, a bent, thin, old man, with an endless nose, who wore a threadbare coat with numberless pockets, each of which contained one or several manuscripts or

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books. What a good, dear man he was, and what a character! He was full of sweet little attentions to my daughter, although she never missed an opportunity of playing tricks on the old savant. He had a curious habit of filling the tail-pockets of his coat with sandwiches, and my mischievous Marthe one day put some cream puffs among some sandwiches on a plate. Oppert did not look when, according to his custom, he filled his pocket, and in went the puffs with the sandwiches, with the result that presently the cream was oozing out from his coat-tails, much to Marthe's glee.

Did he guess who was responsible for this little joke! I could not tell. . . . All I know is that at Christmas that year he sent Marthe, instead of a doll or a toy, a Sanskrit grammar, and on New Year's day, to me, whom he perhaps thought my daughter's accomplice, instead of flowers or marrons-glacés, his huge work on "The People and the Language of the Medes."

Assyriology leads me to mention M. and Mme. Dieulafoy, well known for their excavations at Suse, and their books. Every one knows that Mme. Dieulafoy is one of the three or four women in France who are authorised to wear men's clothes. This brings back an amusing incident to me.

Mme. Dieulafoy was kindly helping me to dress, one evening, for a theatrical performance in her salons. My maid, a country girl quite new to Paris, was nowhere to be found. When I returned home, I asked her why she had left the Dieulafoys' house when she knew I wanted her. She blushed, spluttered, and finally said: "Forgive me, Madame, but I was late, and when I opened the door of your dressing-room, I saw a gentleman at your feet fastening your costume. . . . So I ran away, feeling that I was not needed at all!"

I laughed at the incident, just as I had laughed a few years before, when, in the Forest of Fontainebleau, I saw a short, white-haired man, wearing a smock, and painting, whom I congratulated. The "man" was Rosa Bonheur, the celebrated animal painter.

Being the wife of a well-known artist, I made the acquaintance not only of sculptors and painters, but of art lovers and collectors, amongst them Chauchard and Groult.

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Of Chauchard, the millionaire founder of the Louvre stores, the philanthropist and grand-cross of the Legion of Honour, there is little to say. Camille Groult, on the other hand, was interesting because he had no false pride and really loved his pictures. He had an estate near Paris close to my summer villa, and I often met him. He had made a fortune as a manufacturer of *pâtes alimentaires* (farinaceous foods) and was proud of it. He was the only man I ever met who could talk romantically of tapioca, rice, spices or sago. I remember how once he told the story of his sago business. It was an epic. He made us—we were a few friends listening to him—travel to Borneo, to Ceram and other isles of the Pacific, described the sago palm and its mature trunks gorged with precious food-starch, the marshy and unhealthy river-banks where the palm grows, the life of the native packers, the price of the gunnybags in which sago travels, the competition between European, Chinese and Eurasian traders and what not. . . . After that I really did keenly relish Groult's sago-flour and see the romantic side of what I had always considered a prosaic business.

Groult once took my husband and me to his old "hotel" in the Avenue Malakoff, to show us his famous collection, which was quite a favour, for he guarded his pictures jealously and rarely let them be seen.

He showed us not only his pictures, but also his collection of Gobelins, and the way in which he spoke, for instance, of the Birth of Bacchus—a wonderful tapestry copied from a cartoon by Boucher—was a sheer delight. He possessed exquisite "Aubussons" with the most delicate pastel hues, old Chinese porcelains, a collection of snuff-boxes, unique pieces of antique furniture (which he caressed as one caresses a lover), a series of fans, the folds of which were as light as the wings of the rare butterflies in the cabinet hard by. And the paintings . . .

There was a room the walls of which were covered with works by Watteau; another, the gem of which was the portrait of La Guimard by Fragonard, Boucher's pupil and friend. And there were pastels by La Tour, the portrait of a woman

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in blue by Nattier, that of Chardin by himself, several Goyas —to say nothing of a whole gallery of Hubert Roberts.

Groult's collection of English masters was almost as wonderful. It contained masterpieces by Gainsborough, Reynolds, Hoppner, Raeburn and Lawrence, and a gallery of Turners, though Turner would perhaps have disowned a number of them. Groult's collection of paintings of the British School was well worth seeing, and, as my husband remarked: "One cannot say as much of that possessed by the Louvre, most of the pictures in which could not have been painted by the master to whom they are attributed. Gainsborough, for instance, is represented at the Louvre by two landscapes in the Italian style, the sight of which would have revolted the painter of *Mrs. Siddons*, the *Blue Boy* and *Little Miss Haverfield* if he had seen them."

To deal at length with all the politicians, functionaries and diplomats I have known is beyond the scope of this book of "Memoirs," the essential portion of which must be that devoted to the mystery of the Impasse Ronsin—the events which preceded and followed the crime, my arrest, my life in prison and my trial.

Besides, very few among those holders of important offices really did "matter" or did achieve anything beyond their ambition—which was, of course, money and promotion, till they could reach no higher in their particular sphere of activity, when their only thought became that of "retaining office"!

. . . . . .

I met King Edward VII., then Prince of Wales, several times.

He asked me one day, quite unexpectedly, what I thought of his French. "Your Highness," I replied, "speaks our language unusually well . . ."

"For one who is not French!"

"For one who is not always in France. But, perhaps, your Highness speaks it too grammatically."

"I see," said the Prince cheerfully, "my French is too perfect to be . . . perfect."

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His power of observation and his memory were amazing. He once recalled every detail about the dress which I had worn at a certain performance at the opera, where I had been seated exactly opposite his box, and then proceeded to describe the diadem of a friend of mine who had sat near me at the same gala performance. He explained that he so much admired the original design that he had had a similar one made for a wedding present. He then spoke of music, knowing how I loved music, and further astounded me by naming, during the conversation, nearly all the items of the programme on that night.

He had a charming sense of humour, and I remember his saying: "In France, I enjoy myself, look round and talk; in Germany, I observe and let others talk; in England . . . I shan't tell you what I do in England. I should be divulging State Secrets!" . . .

Among those that at one time or other came frequently to my salon, I must mention Admiral Gervais, whose visit to Kronstadt with the French squadron marked the first stage of what was to become the alliance with Russia, that counterpoise against the Triple Alliance; M. Sadi Carnot, son of the President, and great-grandson of the great Lazare Carnot, the "organizer of victory"; M. Dujardin-Beaumetz, the sympathetic, obliging, and apparently *inamovible* Under-Secretary of State for Fine Arts, who dined at my house only a month before the tragic night, and my old friend Poubelle, Prefect of the Seine and afterwards Ambassador at Rome, who just before he issued the famous and wise regulation which made it compulsory for every householder to have dust-bins, the contents of which are removed every morning by the city scavengers, sent me a mass of orchids in one of these bins which, as he designed them, are called *poubelles* by the ever-facetious Parisian to this day. My maid was furious and said it was a gross insult to "Madame" to have sent her flowers in a dust-bin!

Many foreigners came to my house. . . . I remember a

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MY DAUGHTER AND I, IN 1901

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He had a charming sense of humour, and I remember his saying: "In France, I enjoy myself, look round and talk; in Germany, I observe and let others talk; in England . . . I shan't tell you what I do in England. I should be divulging State Secrets!" . . .

Among those that at one time or other came frequently to my salon, I must mention Admiral Gervais, whose visit to Kronstadt with the French squadron marked the first stage of what was to become the alliance with Russia, that counterpoise against the Triple Alliance; M. Sadi Carnot, son of the President, and great-grandson of the great Lazare Carnot, the "organizer of victory"; M. Dujardin-Beaumetz, the sympathetic, obliging, and apparently *inamovible* Under-Secretary of State for Fine Arts, who dined at my house only a month before the tragic night, and my old friend Poubelle, Prefect of the Seine and afterwards Ambassador at Rome, who just before he issued the famous and wise regulation which made it compulsory for every householder to have dust-bins, the contents of which are removed every morning by the city scavengers, sent me a mass of orchids in one of these bins which, as he designed them, are called *poubelles* by the ever-facetious Parisian to this day. My maid was furious and said it was a gross insult to "Madame" to have sent her flowers in a dust-bin!

Many foreigners came to my house. . . . I remember a

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MY DAUGHTER AND I, IN 1901

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Spanish family—the P. L.—who, dreading the icy winds which blow from the Guadarrama, left Madrid every year to spend the winter in Paris, up north. The mother had a passion for hot chocolate and for "Grand Guignol" thrills . . . and her eldest daughter never tired of admiring the old gargoyles on Notre Dame which, like Victor Hugo, she called a "symphony in stone." She was bitterly disappointed when, having introduced her to M. Viollet-le-Duc, I told her that it was this gentleman's father who was responsible for a very considerable portion of her beloved mediæval chimeras.

I had several Dutch friends. The ladies dressed simply, though clearly, and were somewhat narrow-minded; and, apparently, their one great care was to be *deftig*, that is, *comme il faut*, "good form" with just a touch of culture. They talked constantly of their homes at the Hague or Amsterdam, with such pride and even fire, that I wondered how they could have left Holland at all. I knew some Swiss folk who talked of Eugène Rambert as of a very great poet, and of Secrétan as the Last Metaphysician. I knew Roumanians who all talked about oil and wheat, who described Sinaïa, Carmen Sylva's summer residence, as the most beautiful mountain-home in the world, and who acquainted me with their country's songs and popular ballads, which have delightful names: *Stellele*, *Sarutatul*, *Doina*, and which took not only me, but my mother and my little Marthe, right out of the world. I received several Germans, whom I learned to know at once, and many English people whom it took months to make out . . . but it was often worth it.

I met a young Bolivian couple, who before leaving Paris kindly invited me to spend a few days with them, any time I chose, at La Paz . . . only a five or six weeks' journey. And there was a very distinguished Chinaman who had become my friend because, as he put it; "You are one of the few women who have never stared at me with wonder or curiosity, who have never asked me indiscreet questions, and who have never begged me to sign my name and title in an autograph-book . . . 'and in Chinese, please.' "

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As a matter of fact, I never possessed an autograph-book, and that is probably the reason why I have so many letters from great men and "celebrities."

I have been on excellent terms with many Russians, including a young princess, tall, green-eyed, and white-skinned, who had the soft graceful movements of a cat, and smoked cigarettes from morn till night; whose dresses seemed always about to slip off her shoulders and whose favourite poet was Baudelaire . . . and who, in spite of her many weird and morbid eccentricities, managed to be a most devoted wife, a most loving mother, and a most faithful friend.

What extraordinary people there are amongst the Russians! They seem to have twice as much vitality as the average person, their nerves are always highly strung, and yet never seem to snap; they have a tremendous capacity for work and equally tremendous capacity for wasting time, and are altogether greater "living paradoxes" than the French themselves!

I remember a great Muscovite official, who one evening left the drawing-room to return into the dining-room, where he rapidly emptied not only every bottle and decanter but also the glasses of my forty guests, even those glasses which contained only a few drops of wine. He fell dead drunk, and had to be carried to the garden, where a railway director and the Minister of Public Instruction played the hose on his head.

Fifteen minutes later, he was back in the drawing-room, and captivating us all by his sober, vivid, and extremely clear-sighted account of the political situation of Europe from the Russian Government's standpoint!

A pretty incident occurred one afternoon at my house, in which another distinguished Russian was concerned. He was my friend, General Eletz, who could be called "the bravest of the brave."

My uncle, General Japy, often said to him in his blunt manner; "What a pity you are a Russian. You are the very kind of officer we like in the French Army!" General Eletz had written a book on the "Hussars of the Imperial Guard," and he had hardly been in the room a few minutes, before

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there entered the French General de Chalandar, who had written on the "Hussards de Chamboran." Now, each had sent the other a copy of his book, and so the two had become great friends, by post, but this was their first meeting.

The two men stood face to face, both very tall and athletic.

"General de Chalandar, General Eletz," I said, introducing them.

"What . . . Hussar of the Guard?" asked the one.

"What . . . Hussar of Chamboran?" asked the other, and the two delighted giants shook hands for fully ten minutes in the most ardent and energetic manner. . . . Then suddenly, General Eletz turned pale, staggered, and collapsed. My mother and I attended to him, and when he had sufficiently recovered, he drove away, without telling us the cause of his collapse.

I found it out afterwards. He had stopped a runaway horse half an hour before calling on me, and had been dragged along for some distance. His shoulders and his knees had been badly injured, but he had promised to come, and after brushing off the dust, he came. . . . But the ten minutes hand-shaking had been too much for him.

Of all these foreigners, my sympathy went out, above all, to the Russians, because I found them brave, intelligent, and kind; to the Americans on account of their straightforwardness, and their delightful disregard of conventionalities; and to the English, because of their healthy minds and their stolidity, which was often refreshing and soothing to me in my restless life.

For over fifteen years, then, from my marriage to the fatal date of May 30th-31st, 1908, I experienced that peculiar sensation which you cannot easily do without when once you have known it, the sensation which comes from being always surrounded by many people, from having near you scores of friends (and a few enemies too), day after day, until solitude becomes unthinkable—as distant and fanciful a notion as that of life on a desert isle—from hearing every day something

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fresh or unexpected, from constantly renewing your little stock of knowledge, the sensation of unending giving and taking.

Whether you wish it or not, you wear your mind, your nerves, your heart and your vitality; and you receive in return thoughts, suggestions, ideas, and often genuine sympathy. You belong less and less to yourself and more and more to others, to what is called *le monde*. . . . Sometimes you receive less than you give, and you return home exhausted from a soirée at which you have talked, struggled, conquered, advised, persuaded, consoled—and also sung and played, and listened; and if you are not too tired to think about it all, you say to yourself: I am the dupe, not only of life, but of my own heart. I wear myself away for others, and when I come back and cry out to my heart for admittance, I find that I cannot enter and be alone with myself. You must be selfish to live happily—or even to live—at all. . . .

But the next day, after all too short a night, how eagerly you take up and open the letters the maid brings you—often a whole tray full of them—and how your heart thrills once more to the world as you read . . .

Three invitations to dinner . . . and one of them says, "Please bring some songs with you, the great So and So will accompany you." . . . A lady friend begs me to come to tea that very afternoon, she needs my advice, something dreadful has happened. . . . A member of my family, a functionary, has lost his temper; will I see his Minister and save him. . . . Mme. Z. gambled and lost . . . heavily; what is she to do? . . . My dear mother feels lonely. Will I come to Beaucourt for a few days? . . . Marthe's governess is ill; will I find some one to replace her for a week or two? . . . I am reminded that there is a reception at the English Embassy, I must not forget to come. . . . My friend Mustel relies on me to come and listen to his new organ, an orchestra, a marvel. . . . The Duchess of Y. is impatiently waiting for those fifty children's dresses I said I would send for her "*ouvroir*." . . . My dressmaker will come at four. . . . Mme. C. writes she'll call at two to take me to the Geographical Society, where her husband, who has recently returned from a perilous expedition, will

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lecture. She'll never forgive me if I don't come. . . . And here are letters from poor people I know. . . . A mother's appeal for her starving children, an old workman who has lost his job . . . he hails from Beaucourt, and years ago worked on my father's estate. . . . Two poor girls to whom I often give some sewing to do, are dangerously ill. . . . And there is the rehearsal of an oratorio at the Temple, and a sale of old silver which I have promised to attend with the newly-married Countess de M. who knows nothing about old silver, and wants to learn, because her husband collects. . . . And here comes my darling Marthe: "Mother, do spend the whole day with your little girl . . . please!" . . .

How I would love to!

What a life! I feel like the owner and captain of a ship. I have built it; I have launched it on unknown seas, and have started upon an expedition to the land of Nowhere. . . . Society-life has no object since it has itself as object. . . . And yet I feel I cannot desert my ship, if only because I sometimes pick up a shipwrecked sister or a drowning brother, and because I have lost my bearings, . . .

What a life! You sigh, you complain, and then comes the reaction. . . . I have wasted a precious half-hour dreaming, lamenting. "Quick! Clotilde! my tailor-made dress, the navy-blue one, my toque and a pair of gloves. It is already ten o'clock. I shall never manage to do all I must do to-day!"

Of course, they are not real duties these "Society" duties but you do them more or less conscientiously and always with energy—for you are in a hurry! And meanwhile you neglect the other duties, the real ones, including the duties to yourself. . . . That is Parisian life. And when you have tasted its exquisite poison you cannot do without it, no more than a "Society queen" (Oh! the emptiness of such a title) can do without elegance, chocolates, scent, cosmetics, compliments, and other indispensable things!

I have been criticised because I sometimes received men and women whose standard of morality was not of the highest. . . . But in Paris, if you were to receive only paragons of virtue, you would indeed, receive very few people. . . . Yes,

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there came to my house men whose talk went a little further than I could have wished, and ladies whose minds were not so pure as the transparent gems they wore in profusion. . . . There came to the villa in the Impasse Ronsin people who were ingeniously romantic, wickedly childish and recklessly unconventional; but whatever their moral shortcomings, they were never dull. And that is a great deal.

And what pleasant and brilliant conversations, even when the *causeurs* were too short-sighted or too far-sighted in their views. Thus I had friends who wished all music was destroyed and forgotten except the works of Richard Strauss, others who would have given their lives for Maeterlinck, and quite a number of men who wanted to *save* France (there is an amazing number of people in France who believe that the country is irretrievably lost unless their advice is followed). All these persons may have been rather foolish, but they never bored; their ideas were often wrong but never absurd. . . . And there always happened to be present some one who made them agree—with themselves.

I have been further criticised for "doing everything myself." "Everything" is an exaggeration, but I certainly did a great deal in my house, and I am proud of it. At Beaucourt my father made me do as many things as possible in our home, although he was wealthy. I then made at least half my dresses and hats, and fulfilled a thousand and one household duties. I thought my father was right, and marriage did not change my views on the matter.

Should I have given up my salons and my receptions, the pleasant and interesting relations with men and women of the world, with men of talent and men of genius, just because my husband and I had not an unlimited account at the bank? Should I have deprived myself of those intellectual and artistic joys which add so much to life because I could not entertain as lavishly as did some of my wealthier friends?

Yes, I helped with the household work in the morning, and when I thought that a room would be improved by changing the position of a piece of furniture, I helped the servants to move it. . . . I may here mention that all this was carefully

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noted, after my arrest, and the examining magistrate, M. André, made the following argument in all seriousness: "A woman who is strong enough to assist in moving a cupboard or a sideboard is strong enough to strangle one or two persons with her own hands." . . .

Although I loved that "mundane" life, it was not on account of its "brilliant" side, but because I found there satisfactions of the mind which to some extent made up for my unfortunate married life, and also because I was able to make some use of my numberless acquaintances—those especially who held high office—to help in their careers my husband's relatives or mine, or any friend.

But there were hours of bitter dejection, when it seemed to me that of the crowd of people I knew who proclaimed themselves my devoted friends, there were not ten men and women on whom I could absolutely rely and who fully deserved the beautiful name of "friend"; hours when the compliments with which I was overwhelmed rang formal and untrue, when sympathy was hypocrisy or calculation; hours when I loathed the artificiality of Parisian life! . . .

I sought then a refuge in long conversations with my husband in his studio, where I helped him in his work, and in the tender love of my mother. Or I pressed my little Marthe to my heart and a fierce craving would seize me to flee with her to Beaucourt, to beautiful Beaucourt, the home of my happy youth, and lead there a modest, normal life with my child! But Paris does not let go of its victims. . . .

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CHAPTER VI

FÉLIX FAURE

Beyond the hours of depression and the every-day troubles that fall to the lot of all human beings: disappointed dreams, thwarted ambitions, shattered illusions, financial cares and family worries, there happened nothing particularly eventful in my life until the day when I became the friend and confidante of Félix Faure, elected President of the Republic in January 1895.

The political and other events of general interest which took place in France during the years immediately preceding that date, may be summed up in a few words.

After the Panama scandal and the vanishing of the "two hundred and fifty million francs," cabinets were formed and cabinets fell with symptomatic and alarming rapidity. For instance, in January 1893, Ribot becomes Premier, but already in March Dupuy succeeds him. The general election reveals nothing . . . except the nation's apathy. The election of fifty Socialists as deputies, however, is worth noting. Later Casimir Périer becomes Prime Minister. He has a revered name, is capable, and he is wealthy, but his Ministry does not last six months, and in May 1894, Dupuy returns to power. The next month an Italian anarchist murders President Carnot, the noblest of men and an able statesman, worthy grandson of the victor of Wattignies, of Lazare Carnot, the "Organiser of Victory." Four days later, the Congress sitting at Versailles, elects Casimir Périer to the highest office in the Republic, but in January 1895, tired of being slandered, fettered, and insulted, and for private reasons, too, Casimir Périer resigns and Félix Faure becomes President.

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He had rapidly reached the supreme rank. Under-Secretary for the Colonies from 1882 to 1885 in Jules Ferry's Cabinet, he was elected vice-president of the Chamber in 1893, became Minister for the Navy in 1894, and President of the Republic in 1895.

That very year he received the Lord Mayor of London, Sir Joseph Renals, and the following year, in October, the Czar and the Czaritza. I attended the gala performance at the Opera, the laying of the first stone of the Alexander III. bridge, which was to illustrate in stone and bronze the Franco-Russian Alliance, and even went to Châlons to see the military review held there. I had left Beaucourt for the purpose of attending these ceremonies in the company of an important official. The Czar struck me as more unassuming than the President, and the rather pathetic beauty of the Empress of all the Russians made a deep impression upon me. France went Russia mad, and Félix Faure became extremely popular.

The Alliance which had been marked by the visit of a French squadron commanded by Admiral Gervais to Kronstadt (1891), the mission of General Boisdeffre to St. Petersburg in the following year, and the visit of the Russian Admiral Avelan to Toulon and Paris in 1893, was to become a *fait accompli* during the return visit of Félix Faure to the Czar in August 1897.

Three months before this momentous visit there occurred in Paris the terrible catastrophe of the *Bazar de la Charité* which claimed some hundred and fifty victims. I miraculously escaped death that day. I was one of the ladies in charge of the buffet, and was serving tea, when I felt suddenly unwell, so much so that, reluctantly, I had to leave the Bazaar. The carriage in which I drove home had hardly turned the corner of the Rue Jean Goujon when the fire broke out.

My mother arrived at my house in a state of mad terror, for she had accompanied me a few hours before as far as the doors of the Bazaar, and when she had heard of the fire, had feared that I was one of the victims. I was safe but, alas, lost my dear friends in the catastrophe.

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A few weeks later the second jubilee of Queen Victoria was celebrated, and with a few English friends staying in Paris, I attended the great garden-party given at the British Embassy by Sir Edmund Monson. Mme. Faure and her daughter, M. Hanotaux, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the whole literary, artistic, and political *élite* of France were present.

I heartily congratulated an eminent English personage on the splendour of the reception and the atmosphere of pleasant mirth which permeated the Embassy.

"Of course, Madame," he remarked, "the Embassy has not always this bright animation! But you must not believe that we English are as sedate and stolid and gloomy as some people say. And I may inform you, by the way, that this house was once the residence of the notorious Pauline Borghese, whose only ambition was to be pretty and to . . . to be loved." He then told us a number of lively anecdotes about the ravishing sister of Napoleon—and concluded; "Don't you think there is something piquant in the fact that the Ambassador of stern and solemn Old England lives in a house which once belonged to a famous crowned courtesan!"

On July 14th—the day of the *fête nationale*—the usual review took place at Longchamps, and I took my six-year-old daughter to see "the soldiers," but, instead of watching them, she kept staring at the Rajah of Kapurthala, who was close to us, and asking endless questions which brought smiles to the lips of all those who overheard her, but embarrassed me very much.

I spent the rest of July and the whole month of August in the Alps, with my husband, who had to work "on the spot," for a vast "panorama of the Alpine Club," which was intended for the Exhibition of 1900. The Alpine manœuvres were in progress at the beginning of August, and President Faure, who had been to Valence and Orange, came to witness them. Just before a sham fight by the Chasseurs Alpins near the Vanoise Pass, my husband took up a position whence he could survey the coming scene, and I, further down and camera in hand, was preparing to take snap-shots from the top of a

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rock, when I heard some voices. There, below me, was a group of men, and one of them, wearing a red shirt, a brown suit, yellowish gaiters, and a white *béret*, looked up at me and said something I could not hear. I believe he asked whether he should stop to be photographed. I failed to recognise the President of the Republic and his suite. But shortly afterwards an officer came to ask whether M. and Mme. Steinheil would lunch with the President. I declined, thinking the invitation too sudden and too formal, but my husband accepted and told me he would ask the President for permission to paint the forthcoming "distribution of decorations" at La Traversette.

Needless to say, I had met the President before. For several years I had regularly attended functions at the Elysée, and had made the acquaintance of Félix Faure, as I had made that of Carnot and of Casimir Périer. I had even spoken at length with him on two or three occasions when he was Minister for the Navy.

That same day, in the village which at the time was my husband's headquarters, I saw the President once more. A group of little girls, wearing the quaint old dresses of Savoy, were offering flowers to him. . . . Félix Faure saw me, bowed deeply, and afterwards there came an invitation to dinner—which I declined. The next morning yet another invitation came, this time to lunch, near Bourg Saint-Maurice, at the redoubt which overlooks the Petit Saint Bernard. My husband accepted, but I declined again, under the first pretext that occurred to me. . . . The truth was that I was far too busy collecting native buckles, bracelets and crosses, the wooden birds in which the Savoy peasants keep salt, and all the headdresses I could buy, to care to lunch with the "first magistrate" in the land and his suite! I much preferred the milk, cheese, and brown bread of the mountaineers to all the dainties and wines of the presidential table. When at night my husband returned with his companions—a judge and a mayor—I was told the President repeatedly alluded to my absence. My husband made his sketches of the distribution by President Faure of "decorations" to Alpine soldiers at La

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Traversette, and joined me again. The Chief of the State left for Annecy and Paris, and later, while my husband and I were leading the simple life in the mountains of Savoy, the President was in Russia with the Czar, enjoying the banquets given in his honour at Kronstadt, St. Petersburg and Peterhof.

My husband's painting of the Traversette scene included, of course, portraits of the various members of the President's suite and they—ministers and officers—came during the autumn to the studio in the Impasse Ronsin to sit for their portraits. The President gave a sitting to M. Steinheil at the Elysée. An exchange of letters followed. Félix Faure was anxious to see the "historic" painting, and I was told that he wished to visit our house, which had been described to him by his *entourage*, in which I numbered several friends. I was overwhelmed with invitations to the Elysée. . . . At the beginning of 1898 the picture was completed, and the President called one morning to see it.

My uncle, General Japy, was with my husband and me to receive him. My garden was one huge bouquet, and as soon as he had entered, with General Bailloud and a young officer, the President expressed his delight. Marthe offered him a sheaf of flowers that was almost as big as herself, but absolutely refused to be kissed. Her obstinacy amused Félix Faure, who asked:

"What is the toy you like best?"

"A doll."

"What is your name?"

"Marthe."

"Well, little Marthe, I will give instructions for a perfect doll with a complete trousseau to be made and sent to you, exactly the same as I am sending to the Czar's daughter."

"Thank you," said Marthe quietly, but nevertheless refused to be kissed.

Félix Faure admired the drawing-room and the "winter-garden," examined closely as a connoisseur a few pieces of antique furniture, and then stopping near the piano: "Ah! It is no fun to be a President," he sighed. "I am deprived of

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PRESIDENT FELIX FAURE

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music. . . . Of course the band of the Republican Guard plays at the dinner-parties at the Elysée, and there is the Opera, and . . . the Marseillaise, wherever I go, but I seldom, if ever, hear the music I love, chamber music, or a simple song, sung at the piano!"

He told me that he had heard about the musical parties at my house, and that his friend Massenet was also my friend, and finally asked whether I would sing, just for once, at the Elysée.

"No, M. le President," I replied. "I don't believe I could sing there. . . . It seems to me that everything official is necessarily inartistic, and I should not care to sing in surroundings that were uncongenial."

He walked to my husband's studio. The President was delighted with the picture.

"Do you know," he asked me, "that they are singing a song on the boulevards about the white *béret* I wore at the Alpine manœuvres?"

"I suppose they are comparing it to Henri IV.'s famous white plume, M. le President," a young officer suggested.

"No, . . . I wish they did. . . . There's nothing historical about the song. Still, it is an advertisement, and even Presidents need *réclame*. . . . It is a very caustic but still very jolly song."

Marthe exclaimed: "Please sing it to me!"

"I will if you will give me that kiss!"

Marthe ran away.

The President looked at the pictures in the studio. He paused before a small painting by my husband, representing a woman of Bourg Saint-Maurice, wearing the pretty mediæval cap still in use in certain parts of Savoy. It is like a round helmet of brilliantly coloured material, with a point above the forehead. The hair tightly plaited is twisted round with black tape, which forms part of the helmet (a three hours' process which the women at Bourg Saint-Maurice told me they only went through twice a month), and from that strange but becoming headgear hangs a loose chain made of black and golden beads.

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Félix Faure was so delighted with this little portrait that he insisted on buying it. . . . Needless to say, it was gladly offered to him as a souvenir of his brief stay in the Alps.

He then insisted on inviting my husband and me to lunch at the Elysée. . . . "And don't refuse, this time," he added, turning to me.

From that day flowers and invitations rained upon me from the Elysée.

A month or two afterwards, the *vernissage* (opening day) of the Salon, which the President of the Republic attends each year, took place, and Félix Faure was present with Méline, the Premier, Hanotaux, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and a large array of prominent functionaries. My friend Bonnat, Director of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and "Painter of Presidents," conducted Félix Faure through the rooms.

Suddenly, Bonnat came to me and said gaily: "The President has been asking for you ever since he arrived here. I believe he is fond of you, as we all are, even I, your dear 'Methuselah!' Please come and meet him; I have left him with your husband; they are both expecting you."

I gave him a gentle tap with my catalogue; he ran back to fulfil his official duties, and five minutes later, the Army, in the shape of a colonel, came to fetch me.

"I am delighted," said Félix Faure, "to be at last able to congratulate you, Madame."

"You forget I did not paint the picture," I said in a low voice.

"The State," he went on, "desires to acquire it."

"You forget the picture belongs to my husband."

"You know most painters, Madame; will you consent to act as my guide?"

"Yes, with M. Bonnat's indispensable assistance."

I took the President quickly past the works of famous painters—those loaded with honours and wealth—and made him stop before the paintings of little-known and talented artists who needed—and deserved—recognition; and I had the satisfaction of seeing Félix Faure and a few members of his

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suite make a note of the names of certain young but promising painters. . . .

"I am taking advantage of your kindness, Madame, but I am the President of the Republic, and I am sure you are a patriot. . . . You hail from the Eastern frontier? . . ."

"My birth-place is only half an hour from Alsace . . . but one may be a patriot without being attached to the Republic, M. le President. Who knows but that I am a Bonapartist?"

Félix Faure promptly replied: "I should understand if there were still a Bonaparte!"

We parted, and with a few close friends, I went round the various rooms. Just as I was about to leave, M. Roujon, Director at the Ministry of Fine Arts, rushed towards me. . . .

"The President," he began breathlessly.

"What! Again the President."

"Yes, still the President, Madame. . . . He has requested me to tell you that he doesn't wish the State to buy your husband's picture. He has acquired it for himself."

Aggravated, I went to Bonnat, who had already heard the news.

"You can do nothing," he said. "How can you prevent the President from ranking above the State . . . in such a matter!"

I appreciated Félix Faure's kindly intentions, but thought his methods rather too impulsive and embarrassing.

My husband wrote to the President to thank him. We called on him several times at the Elysée, and a warm friendship formed.

One afternoon, I had a long conversation with Félix Faure, in his study. We had often talked of art, music, travel and politics, but never going much beyond the surface of things. . . . This time, he was extremely earnest and spoke to me about the hopeless political situation in France and the ever inceasing difficulties he had to face. He spoke about the general elections which had just taken place. . . . The Socialists had polled an extraordinary number of votes; the

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Radical deputies elected exceeded the Moderates in number. . . . A new party had risen: the Nationalists. What these meant was not quite clear but they certainly meant mischief. Every one was dissatisfied. . . . Anarchy was rampant. . . . The *Chambre* was an incoherent assembly and there was the Dreyfus Affair to tackle. . . . Thank Heaven, the elections had shown that the Republican majority was against Dreyfus and his supporters. . . . But trouble was brewing.

"I know all this," I said, "but how can I help you? I am not a Cabinet Minister!"

"Quite so . . . but I am sure you could help me a great deal, if only to discover the truth . . ." he remarked seriously, then, changing his tone he added whimsically: "Do you know I have heard a great deal about you, of late? It appears that you have unusual powers of persuasion. In the various Ministries, when I wish to secure this or that post for a *protégé*, I am invariably told that it has already been promised to one of your friends. Your candidates pass before mine . . ."

We talked about his career and about my life. . . . Then he took me round the place. He showed me the hall where Napoleon had held receptions and the room where he had last slept in Paris after the battle of Waterloo, the "Hall of Sovereigns" where Napoleon had abdicated and where Queen Victoria had stayed in 1855.

After walking round the gardens we returned to the President's study.

Thenceforth, I met him almost every day, either in the Bois de Boulogne, where he rode in the morning, or at the Elysée. He would telephone to me at any hour of the day. There was always something to do, some one to sound. Félix Faure had fullest confidence in me and I went, for him, when he could not go himself, to the sittings of the Chamber of Deputies or of the Senate, to certain receptions and parties. He was surrounded by enemies, and he knew it. He made use of my intuition, of my knowledge of people. I met him after all the Cabinet Councils, and he told me what had been discussed and decided.

A new life began for me; my *rôle* of confidante had its

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difficulties and even its dangers, but it had a wonderful fascination. My salon was now more crowded than ever before. Invitations were showered upon me both from quarters friendly with the Government and from quarters in league with the Opposition. My "friends" were legion, and my enemies—you cannot possess influence or power without making enemies—were greater flatterers than the others.

Then, there were men who tried to persuade me of this, that or the other, so that I should in my turn persuade the President, and those who laid traps for me, men whose entreaties were disguised threats, who tried to know what I knew, and who did not seem to realise that their very attitude revealed quite plainly their shameless scheme. . . .

How often I was able to warn the President in time against a dangerous mistake. How often I prevented him from appointing to some responsible position a man who perhaps had an interesting career behind him, and a stainless reputation, but under whose mask of impassiveness I had been able to detect a man without scruples or principles, an *arriviste*, ready to sell everything and even himself to achieve his ambition. . . . No man is inscrutable to a woman, especially when that woman is devoted to one whom she has decided to help, and when she is supposed to care for nothing more essential than music, flowers, dress, or success.

And I hasten to add that I sided no more with one party than with another.

At the time when the whole French nation was divided into two parties, there were among my best friends, among the men whom I most respected and admired, staunch Dreyfusards and also staunch anti-Dreyfusards.

I believed then, as I believe to-day, in tolerance, liberty, and legality. I never took part in one single political discussion, not even in my own drawing-room. What I heard I remembered, and when I thought that a piece of what I would call "psychological information" could assist the President I retold it to him.

It goes without saying that I was very much sought after, if only because I had some influence in most ministries and at

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the Elysée. And it was a source of real joy to me to be able to render services to so many people who seemed to need them. I remember, for instance, a Minister, who after some unlucky speculations had so many debts, just at the time when one Cabinet fell, that he was lost unless he obtained a portfolio—and the salary attached to it—in the next. His friends implored me to intercede with the President on his behalf.

"He has rendered poor services as a Minister," said Félix Faure when I approached him, "but I will see that he is appointed to a post for which he is better suited, although I am sure he is not worth bothering about. The post will be less conspicuous, but quite as lucrative . . . and that seems to be the great point."

Need I add that the ex-Minister became my enemy afterwards? The greater the services, as a rule, the greater the ingratitude.

The number of incidents of all kinds—strange, tragic, heroic, harrowing, comical, or revolting—which I witnessed during the year 1898, is truly amazing. I recall a leader of society, a noblewoman, who sacrificed her fortune, her reputation, and her happiness for the sake of a man implicated in the Dreyfus affair, in whom she had absolute faith, and who made a political blunder that plunged him into a tragedy for which he certainly was only indirectly responsible. I remember a prominent and really able citizen who, in a moment of patriotic frenzy, made such a fool of himself that he and all his family, for whose sake he made a daring but absurd move, was crushed under that almighty and often unjust power—Ridicule. I recall a pigmy, in size and brains, who through sheer luck and a sly use of his opportunities, became famous for a while, and made a fortune out of other men's thoughts. And I could tell the abject story of a personage of very high standing in whom Félix Faure had complete confidence. Somehow I distrusted that man, and succeeded in preventing the President from accepting his statements as "gospel" truth at a time when, owing to the electional atmosphere of the political world, the slightest errors of judgment became unpardonable faults, and even treachery. . . . After

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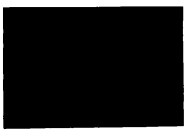

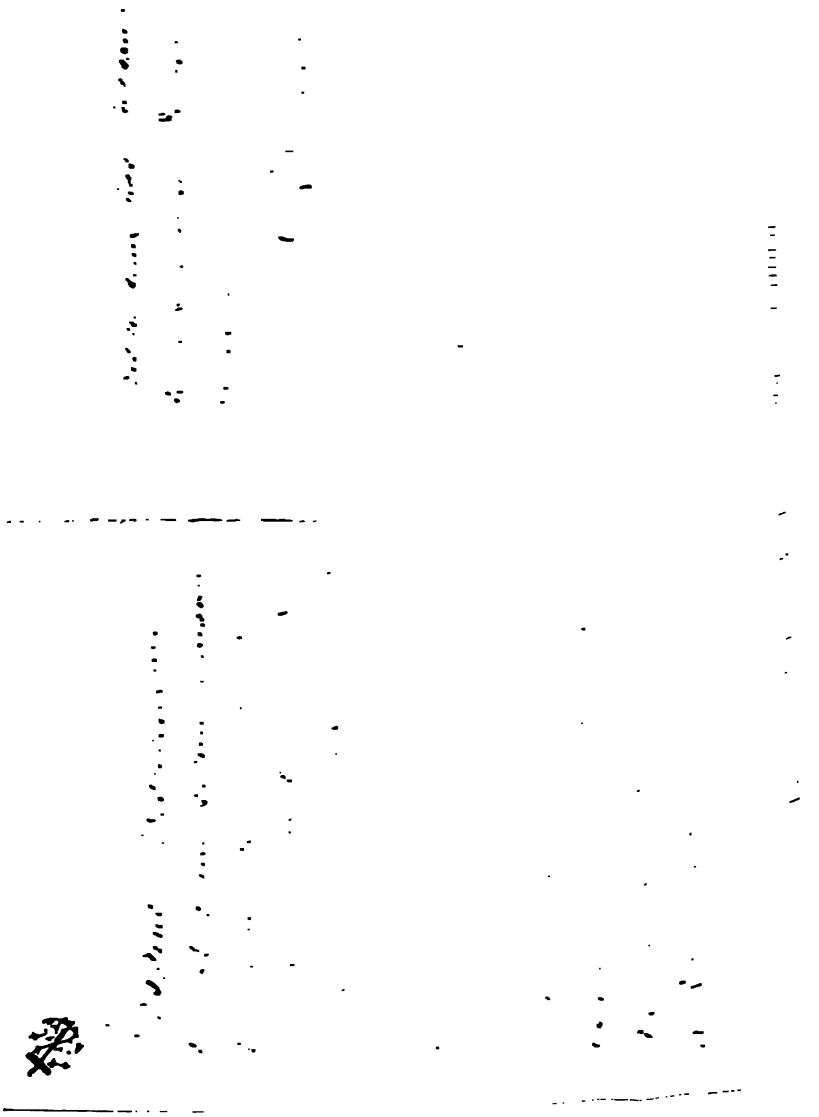

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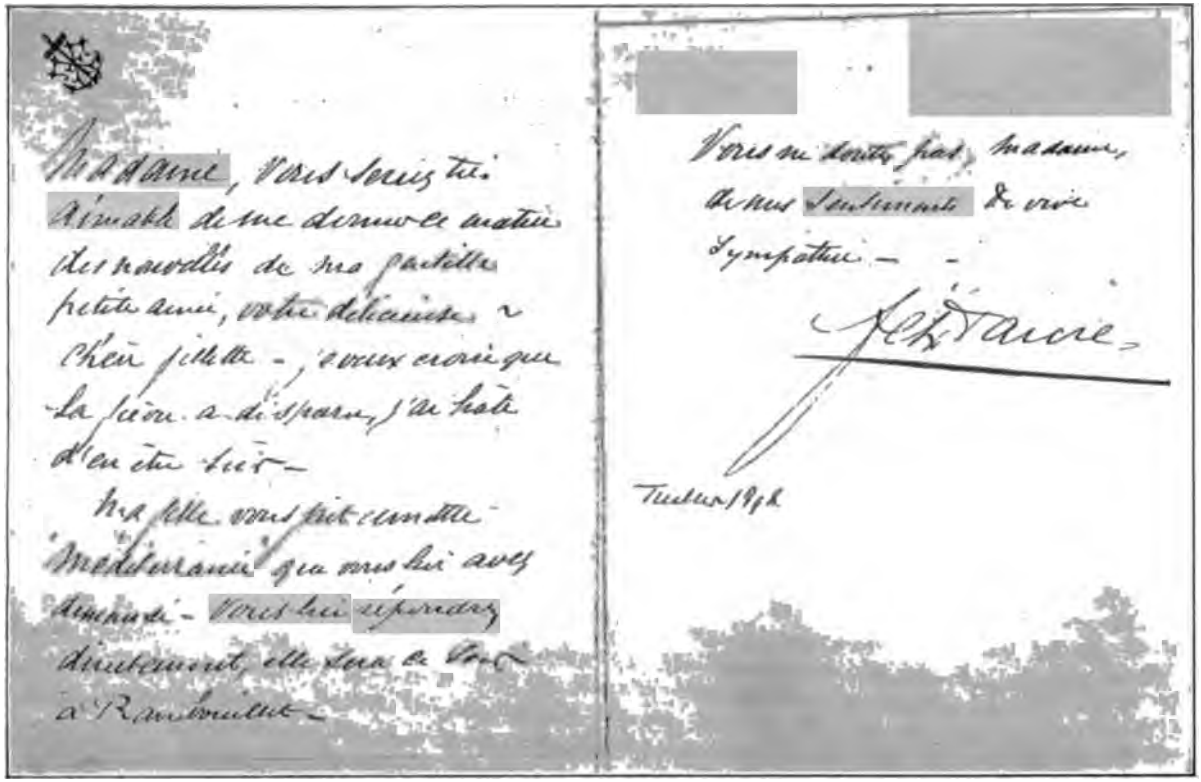

Madame, Vous serez très aimable de me donner quelques nouvelles de ma petite amie, votre délicieuse Chère fillette - j'espère qu'elle a dû se remettre de la fâcheuse impression de la mer - Ma fille vous fait ses amitiés Méditerranée qui vous lui avez demandé - Vous lui répondrez directement, elle tient à vous à Rambouillet -

Vous ne doutez pas, Madame, de mes sentiments de vive sympathie - -

F. Faure

Toulon 1898

A LETTER FROM FELIX FAURE TO MME. STEINHEIL

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the death of the President, and in most unexpected circumstances, I found out that the exalted personage had had, for years, as mistress, a woman who was a spy in the service of the German Embassy. He was that woman's tool, but she loved him, and when he forsook her, Fate brought her to me, in search of a living. I discovered the whole truth about her and her friend, and realised then, and only then, how well-inspired I had been when I warned Félix Faure against the man.

It would be only too easy to quote scores of such facts, but the others, however vaguely I might describe them would still be too transparent, and I do not write these Memoirs out of spite, ill-feeling, or revenge against any one. In this chapter I merely wish to convey some idea of the part I played in President Faure's life.

Félix Faure, having noticed that some of my letters did not reach him, we agreed that in the future when we were unable to meet freely, and when we had some important communication to make to one another, our letters would be sealed with white wax in "urgent," and with blue wax in all other cases; also that my valet would take my messages to the President, and his messages would be handed to the same man, summoned by a private telephone call.

I entered the Elysée—whither a private detective, who had been selected by the President himself, always accompanied me—by a small door in the gardens, at the corner of the Rue du Colisée and the Avenue des Champs Elysées, and through the grounds to the small "blue salon," where the President awaited me for "our task."

That task, as the reader may have already guessed, was the "Memoirs" of the President.

Félix Faure, who, in spite of the many things that satisfied his self-esteem—the brilliant side of his exalted function, the relative importance of it, and, above all, the fact that it placed him on an equal footing with kings and emperors—was looking forward to the end of his *septennat* and was anxious to explain some day his conduct in the political and diplomatic

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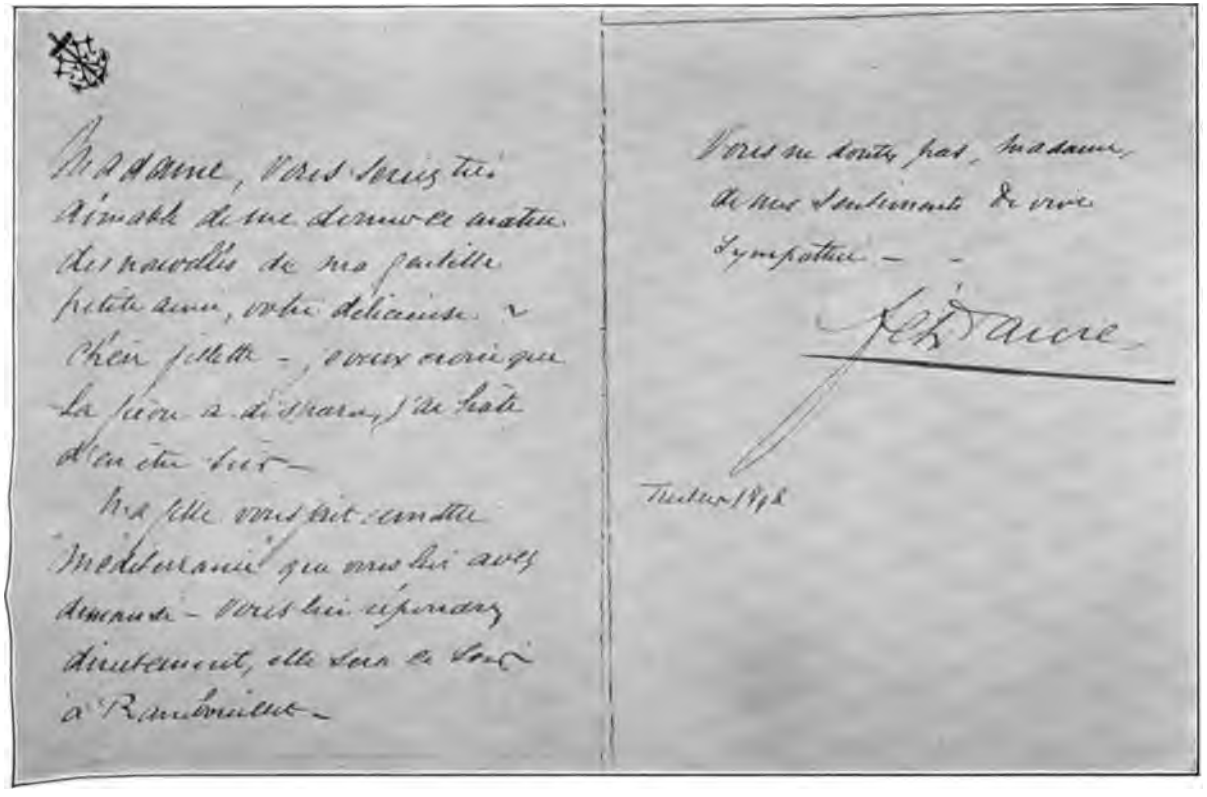

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Ne pensez-vous pas que Méditerranée qui me soit avec demande - Vous lui répondrez directement, elle sera heureuse à Rambouillet -

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events in which he had been and was so intimately concerned. These "Memoirs" were to form a secret history of France since the Franco-Prussian War. To these "Memoirs" I was contributing a mass of notes and comments throwing some light on certain personalities, on certain facts. Sometimes we worked apart, sometimes together, and more than once I spent a whole afternoon examining and classifying documents whilst the President in the next room was granting audiences.

We wrote the "Memoirs" on foolscap which I brought myself, for the President knew that his stationery was counted!

Everything went into these "Memoirs," which were already assuming bulky proportions: the evolution of the internal and the foreign policy of France; the Franco-Russian Alliance; the secret story of the Dreyfus Affair; the schemes of the various Pretenders to the throne of France. There were details on financial problems, colonial expansion, armaments, electoral systems, Administration, the Army and the Navy. . . .

Certainly, if a general and critical survey, conscientious, impartial, sober, and packed with first-hand information of all the events that made the history of the Third Republic, were worth writing—and how can one deny it?—the Félix Faure did well to spend daily long hours of his time, and of mine, in writing his "Memoirs," though had they been published, say, within ten or fifteen years a great number of so-called "prominent" men would have had to disappear in order to escape the scorn of the whole world as well as the execration of their own people.

The "Memoirs" were locked up in an iron box, which was opened only when new material had to be added to the great mass already collected. Then, one day, the President begged me to take these important and secret documents home with me for safety. The iron box was left in his study, and partly filled with blank sheets—for the box might be shaken! I took the contents home, little by little and day by day, until the box was empty.

Many times it seemed to me that I was being shadowed, but my faithful "agent" watched over me, and I was able to store

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all the papers safely away in my house. Félix Faure had told me to keep them (and had given me a letter which said so) and to have them published if I thought fit in the case of his death, for, as he said more than once to me: "I sometimes fear I shall end like Carnot. . . ."

The President had a very high notion of his office, but frequently complained of his limited powers.

"And yet," I once told him, "you appoint your Ministers, the nomination of all officials rests with you, and you control the Army and the Navy. . . ."

"Yes, but to what extent? . . . You say I control the Navy! But I know for a fact that nearly all the powder in the magazines of our battleships is defective, that the armour-plating of those battleships has not the thickness that was ordered—which, of course, means thousands of pounds to the swindlers!—and that the boilers are almost worthless! . . . I have lost my temper and more than once come down on them all like a ton of bricks, but things have not been altered. A President is but a figure-head! And yet you know with what passion I love the Navy. I was born at Le Hâvre, I have always loved all that concerns the sea, and when I entered Parliament my great ambition was to become Minister of the Navy. . . . Even now the Navy is one of my chief interests —my 'hobby,' if you like to call it so; and there is my note-paper with the initials 'F.F.' entwined by a symbolic anchor. . . ."

He loved to talk of naval matters. "I share Delcassé's views," he said once (the conversation took place on the day when he heard that one of our ships had been wrecked on the coast of Madagascar). "England is the great enemy, because England is the great naval power and is so close to our shores and our harbours. Unless we make friends with England, we must find the best way to harass her, in case of war. And I can see nothing better than reviving the old right of privateering and building small but extremely fast craft, large enough to carry a great deal of fuel, so as to be able to remain a long time at sea without replenishing their bunkers. We

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must be able to destroy the commerce of England, to starve her. To avoid important naval engagements and vanquish the enemy in numberless skirmishes, that should be our aim. We have neither the means nor the ability England possesses of building extensively and rapidly."

"But privateering," I suggested, remembering my father's long chat on what he rightly called "the most fascinating period of French history," "was a total failure during the Revolution and the Napoleonic wars."

"Quite so," said Félix Faure; "but as my friend Admiral Fournier says, the only way to make France powerful from a naval standpoint is to supply her with an unique fleet, as regards efficiency and number, of torpedo-boats, destroyers, and submarines."

The President was quite enthusiastic about the Navy. He would explain to me for a whole hour that ships spent far too much time in harbour, that gun-practice was far too limited; he would quote off-hand the gunnery records of certain British and American battleships. And at the end of his talk he would telephone to Lockroy, the Minister of the Navy, and beg him to investigate this or that point, or perhaps suggest that he or some member of his staff should visit this or that station or dockyard.

Félix Faure was less a statesman than a business man. He greatly admired the way in which the English managed their Colonies: "Theirs pay; ours don't. We laugh, alas! at the ideas and customs of the natives. Why don't we imitate the English or the Dutch? But there, we never had any respect for other people's notions or convictions."

The various evils he complained of all came from the same source: politicans in France are not the *élite* of the nation. The best brains, the most able men do not care for politics, and have no ambition to be in office.

The Alliance with Russia, the first move towards which had been made under President Carnot, but for which Faure had done so much, was, naturally enough, a cause of much gratification to him. He would explain at length the utility of the Alliance, and he did so with the gusto of a business man who

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THE FELIX FAURE "TALISMAN"

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has made a wonderful deal, and who, in order to flatter his self-esteem, keeps on finding fresh indications, direct or indirect, of the importance of his bargain.

"Napoleon," he would say, for instance, "was never so powerful as when he was allied to Alexander the First. Again, one may safely assert that France, in 1815, would have been dismembered had it not been for Alexander. Sixty years later it was his nephew, Alexander II., who saved France from a German invasion five years after the Franco-Prussian War.

"And who knew but that that disastrous war might not have been avoided had Napoleon III. not ignored the friendly advances of Gortschakoff!" More than once President Faure showed strong leanings towards a *rapprochement* with England . . . before the Fashoda affair, and this was chiefly due to the influence of the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII.), for whom he felt the greatest personal regard, and whose diplomatic ability he much admired. What would President Faure have said had he lived a few years longer, and seen that, in spite of the Fashoda incident and in spite of the aggressively anglophobic attitude of France during the Boer War, King Edward VII. succeeded, by reason of his charming manner, his diplomacy (so subtle and yet so simple), and his sincere love for France, in making the whole French people extend to England the warm sympathy they felt for him.

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CHAPTER VII

THE DREYFUS AFFAIR—FASHODA

It was during the Presidency of Félix Faure that the chief phase of the Dreyfus affair, and that the Fashoda "incident" took place.

Captain Alfred Dreyfus, accused of having sold military secrets to Germany, was sentenced and degraded in January 1895. Shortly afterwards the officer was conveyed to Devil's Island, north of the Guiana coast.

It was in 1896 that the head of the Intelligence Department of the War Office, Colonel Picquart—whom I had often met at the Elysée—declared that the *bordereau* (the famous covering letter containing a list of documents which Dreyfus had been accused of communicating to Germany) had been written by Major Esterhazy. Colonel Picquart was replaced in his delicate post by Colonel Henry. In 1897, Senator Scheurer-Kestner attempted to have the Dreyfus case reopened, but President Faure objected strongly, and Méline, then Prime Minister, declared that the Dreyfus affair was *classée* (ended for good and all).

From that time a bitter war between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards was raged, and the most scurrilous slanders, the worst insults, became weapons of almost universal use. My salon was neutral ground, but I was soon unable to prevent these impassioned duels of words, in which there showed hardly a sign of tolerance or of human sympathy. And these constant duels took place between men who had been the closest friends all their lives, between brothers, between husband and wife, between father and son. . . . I

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gently pushed the worst disputants away into the conservatory, but the noise of their quarrels—the word discussion would be totally inadequate—reached the drawing-room where a few friends and I tried to play, as an antidote to the raging storm, a page of calm and pure music, by Haydn or Mozart!

To give an example of the strange happenings during that troubled period, I may mention the case of Mme. Z., the wife of an eminent judge, and the high priestess of a famous salon where one met everybody and anybody, the aristocratic "Faubourg Saint-Germain," and also ladies fair and frail such as a certain Mlle. Chichette, whose claim to immortality was based on the fact that she had been the first Parisienne to display on her corsage a tiny tortoise, set with precious stones and—alive.

Mme. Z., who was a rabid Dreyfusard—her husband, of course, being a rabid Anti-Dreyfusard—wore deep mourning during all the time Dreyfus was a prisoner, and appeared in a gaudy blue gown on the day of his liberation. Her mourning had at last come to an end. . . . It is only fair to add that mourning weeds suited her fair hair. There are limits to the noblest heroism.

Major Esterhazy, who had been arrested, was acquitted by the court-martial. Zola, whose famous letter "I accuse . . ." had appeared January 13th, 1898, in the *Aurore*—a journal founded by Clémenceau—was condemned the next month, but the sentence was quashed by the Cour de Cassation (court of supreme appeal), which ordered a new trial. Colonel Picquart was arrested for having made himself an earnest defender of a condemned officer.

Zola went to England, and only returned to France to witness the relative cause he had so ardently supported. Zola died in 1902.

I will now briefly state what I know of the event that took place in France from June 1898 (after the general elections), to February 16th, 1899, the date of Félix Faure's death. It was during that stormy period that I assisted President Faure in gathering documents and writing his

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memoirs. As I have stated, all his papers were, week after week, carefully put away in my house, and the reader will perhaps agree, when I come to deal with the mysterious murder in the Impasse Ronsin, that those papers had some connection with the murder.

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The time was opportune. The Egyptian frontier had been set back as far north as Wadi-Halfa. The Bahr-el-Ghazal was in the hands of the Khalifa and the Dervishes. Belgium coveted that rich province as much as France. It would belong to whoever settled there first. . . . And Marchand had almost reached Fashoda. Perhaps he was there already with his few white companions and his Senegalese soldiers. At any rate, his family had received from him *viâ* the Congo.

The Captain had completed half of his mission, and had started down the Sueh, a tributary of the White Nile, on the boat which the "mission" had carried in sections right in the heart of Africa.

"But what if Marchand has lost most of his men during his

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On June 15th, the Méline Cabinet resigns. The President asks Méline to form a new Cabinet. . . . Méline tried, but failed. Next Ribot, the able and learned statesman, who has been Premier twice before, is requested to form a Ministry. He refuses. Sarrien, in his turn, declines to attempt the difficult task. . . . The President now turns to Peytral, who sets to work. . . . The days go by. Méline and his colleagues resigned on the 15th. It is now the 25th . . . and still no Cabinet. The horizon is dark with threatening clouds. There is chaos everywhere. . . . What is needed, say some, is a Ministry of Concentration; others prefer a Cabinet of Conciliation. . . . Labels have a great importance in France.

On the 26th, Peytral informs the President of—his failure. Brisson, the gloomy and aged President of the Chamber of Deputies (he was born 1835) is now called by Faure. . . . At last, on the 28th, France possesses a Cabinet once more. Brisson is Premier and Minister of the Interior; Cavaignac, who is as strongly against a revision of the Dreyfus case as the President himself, is Minister of War, and the wily, secretive and bold Delcassé succeeds Hanotaux at the Foreign Office.

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On July 7th, I attended the sitting of the Chamber of Deputies. Cavaignac—whom I often met at the Elysée, and at the house of M. Bw., an intimate friend of my husband's, asserts vehemently that there is no doubt whatever about Dreyfus's guilt.

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On the 17th, a letter from Zola to Brisson is published. The letter may be summed up in these words: France is in a hopeless way, and no Ministry will last so long as the Dreyfus affair is not legally dealt with. The President tells me: "If the affair is reopened, we shall never see the end of it; a revision would bring chaos and perhaps even civil war in its wake. Dreyfus was found guilty. If we are firm all this agitation in his favour will subside; order will be restored, and France will breathe again."

Félix Faure meant well, but lacked foresight.

July 27th, my friend Laferriere is appointed Governor-General of Algeria and replaces Lepine. . . . The epidemic of duels is raging through Paris. . . . M. de Pressensé, of the *Temps*, the poet Bouchor and others return their Legion of Honour to the Council of the Order because Zola has been struck off the list of Members of the Order. . . . The Duke of Orleans proclaims everywhere the guilt of Dreyfus and his love for the army. . . . Esterhazy and his lady friend are released! . . .

On August 14th, the President goes to Havre, where he intends to spend a few weeks. I have a villa there, where I stay with my mother and my younger sister. A naval review is held . . . in my honour, I am told. The President is with his suite and Lockroy, the very active Minister of the Marine, on board the *Cassini*. I am with Mlle. Lucie Faure on a steamer. We all spend very happy days at Havre. We make charming excursions; there are parties, concerts, a ball at the town hall. . . . There is one cloud, however. . . . Clémenceau publishes a letter sent some time ago to him by General Billot, Minister of War in the Méline Cabinet, in which the General declares Dreyfus is guilty, but that General Mercier—president of the court-martial which tried Dreyfus, bungled matters. . . .

"Clémenceau," says the President, "is the most dangerous man in the land, and, what is worse, he knows it. I thought we should have some peace when he ceased to be a deputy, five years ago . . . but ever since then he has made himself

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a champion of Dreyfus and founded *l'Aurore*, and I see I am mistaken . . . His pen is as sharp as his tongue."

An event far more serious, far more fraught with consequences than the most vehement attack of Clémenceau, takes place at the end of the month—the arrest of Colonel Henry, who confesses that he forged the fresh proofs of Dreyfus's guilt, which, in July, Cavaignac submitted to the Chamber.

The news of Colonel Henry's arrest and incarceration in the fortress on Mount Valerien, outside Paris, reached the President on August 30th, in the evening. The next day we hear that Colonel has committed suicide. Cavaignac, the Minister of War, resigns. The President, at his "*villa de la côte*," has a long conversation on the telephone with the Premier. . . .

The blow is terrible . . . and in spite of his fortitude and of his optimism—Félix Faure was the luckiest and most fortunate of men—the President feels its full force. It unsettles, it crushes him. He keeps repeating, "Everything is changed!" He is disgusted and indignant. "How can I get at the truth, the real truth. I have had under my very eyes, and more than once, absolute proofs of Dreyfus's guilt. And now it appears that some of those proofs, at any rate, were forged. I can trust no one. Everywhere I stumble against contradictions, reticences, suspicious schemes, double-dealing, deceit. It is impossible to reach the truth in this maze, which is daily becoming vaster and more complicated. I feel desperate and ashamed. There is but one thing for me to do; I must resign the Presidency."

The next day he invites me, with my sister and his great friend Prince P. to a sea-trip. When far from shore he takes me aside: "It is all over, my dear friend. Even after this suicide of Henry, contradictory reports are made to me. It seems impossible to get at the entire truth. I am standing on a quagmire. Every one seems to shield some one else, or himself!

"There are supplies and coal on this vessel for many days. We are going to cruise for a week or so. Let those who are

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responsible for the present state of affairs extricate themselves as best they can from the disgraceful position in which they have placed themselves—and me. . . . When I return, I shall resign. . . . Honest men will understand me!"

The President is blind with anger, and will listen to no advice. Prince P. and I, greatly alarmed, spent two hours in pacifying him, in showing him what an unspeakable scandal such a move would mean. A President cannot *disappear* for a week. . . . I show him the terrible consequences to the Government, to Order and Authority, and to himself, it would entail; the cowardice of such an action. . . . Finally, the President yields and gives the order to return to harbour. I breathe once more, but my alarm has been great.

On September 3rd, the President has another long conversation with the Prime Minister, on the telephone, and early on the 4th he leaves for Paris, where, at the station, Delcassé, who ever keeps a cool head, and General Zurlinden, Governor of Paris, are waiting for him. At the Elysée he is joined by Brisson; President and Premier discuss together the difficult situation created by the confession and suicide of Colonel Henry.

September 5th, 6th, 7th. Momentous news from the Sudan. The victory of Omdurman! Kitchener's army (25,000 men—one-third of whom are English) has won a decisive victory over the Khalifa; the British flag flies at Khartum . . . and Khartum is only a few hundred miles from Fashoda, where, no doubt, Marchand is entrenched! How rapidly events have succeeded one another. In April, near the Atbara, the Sirdar had put the Dervishes to flight. . . . Then the railways which kept bringing up reinforcements from Cairo, was pushed on across the Atbara. . . . On September 1st Omdurman had been bombarded; on the 2nd the Khalifa's army cut to pieces, most of his enemies killed. . . . On the 4th, the Sirdar had reached Khartum. . . . And now the crisis is nearing. What are Kitchener's orders? If Captain Marchand is at Fashoda, and Kitchener hears of it, what will he do? . . .

September 7th, Félix Faure tells me he has asked General Zurlinden to be War Minister. The post is undoubtedly the

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most difficult in the Cabinet, but the General bravely accepts. He is convinced of Dreyfus's guilt, and as he says: "The confession of Colonel Henry and all the suspicions and equivocal manœuvres of a number of Anti-Dreyfusards do not prove that the Court Martial, in 1895, condemned an innocent man." Félix Faure nevertheless realises that the Government will have soon to decide for or against the "Revision," and I express the hope, much to his amazement, that they will decide in favour of it. It seems the only legal way to settle the question.

September the 10th, the Empress of Austria has been murdered! After sending a message of condolence to the Emperor Francis-Joseph, the President and I talk for a long time about the Fashoda problem. The other day we wondered: Would Kitchener go further South than Khartum? Now we know.

He has left Khartum and gone up the White Nile, with four gun-boats, some artillery, Sudanese troops, and Highlanders.

September 12th, doubt is no longer possible; Marchand is at Fashoda! It appears that shortly before the battle of Omdurman, the Khalifa heard of the presence of "white men" at Fashoda. The boat he sent there was riddled with bullets and returned northward. The President is highly elated. The occupation of Fashoda gives France a basis whereon to deal with the Egyptian question. Still, the Sirdar is strong and Marchand is not get-at-able. . . .

There has been six hours of Cabinet-Council to-day. Internal affairs are growing worse every day, and there are bitter disagreements among the various Ministers.

Brisson and Sarrien are in favour of the "Revision"; but the mere mention of the word "revision" sends General Zurlinden mad with fury.

Meanwhile, the war between the various parties to whom the defence of Dreyfus or the fight against him and his supporters is a mere political pretext, a means and not an end, is daily increasing in fierceness. What a nightmare!

September 14th and 15th. A brief respite. I have fol-

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lowed the President to Moulins. My mother is with me. She has never witnessed military manœuvres before. I make the acquaintance of several foreign officers. General de Négrier is Director of the Manœuvres. The Duke of Connaught is present.

September 16th. The Press in France and England is already devoting long columns to Fashoda. The President has had several consultations with Delcassé and is very confident.

"And why not?" he asks. "In the Anglo-Italian agreement of '91, the Upper-Nile Valley is not even mentioned, the Khedive had nothing to do with the Anglo-Belgian arrangement of '94; Nubar Pasha abandoned the Sudan; England declared she had nothing to do there; besides, did not England promise to evacuate Egypt after the Khedive had been restored to power! . . . If we have taken Fashoda, we have taken it not from England or Egypt but from the Dervishes. The British Government is reasonable and not impulsive. . . . Lord Salisbury who is at the same time Premier and Foreign Secretary is a statesman who would not act arbitrarily, I believe. . . . Sir Herbert Kitchener served in the French Army during the war with Germany; he is known for his great self-control and will do nothing rash. . . . And then, the Duke of Connaught, at the Manœuvres, has been extremely courteous and pleasant, and the crowd enthusiastically cheered the son of Queen Victoria. . . . All will be well."

September 17th. General Zurlinden has sent his resignation to Brisson this morning. He is already replaced. General Chanoine becomes War Minister.

At the afternoon sitting of the Cabinet Council, the appointment of a "Commission de Révision" has been decided upon. Whilst Félix Faure explains all this to me, we hear shouting outside the Elysée. . . . I have a number of guests to dinner at home and must rush away. I do not leave the Elysée as usual through the garden and "my" little door, but by the main entrance to see what is happening. Merely a crowd shouting "Vive Brisson" or "A bas Brisson."

On the nineteenth, at an early hour, the telephone bell rings. It is the President.

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"Did you read the *Temps* last night?" he asks.

"No. I had a holiday. . . . I played hide and seek with Marthe who would not go to bed, much to the amusement of my mother who has just come from Beaucourt to spend a few days with my sister and me. What was there in the *Temps*?"

"Listen. It said exactly what I think about Fashoda. We will consider any act threatening Marchand—that is, the flag which he guards—as carrying with it all the consequences usual in such incidents."

"Splendid!"

"No, have you read the manifesto of the Pretender?"

"Which one?"

"The Duke of Orleans."

"No, but I suppose he tells all Frenchmen that their most sacred rights are being trampled on, that the army is being ruined, and that France can rely on him. Is that it?"

"Yes. . . . You don't take him seriously? . . ."

"Do you?"

September 21st. The "Commission de Révision" meets. Colonel Picquart accused of forgery—he, of all men!—appears before his judges.

September 25th. At last! News from the Sudan. The Sirdar is back in Khartum from Fashoda, where he met Marchand. There has evidently been no conflict. Diplomacy will now take the matter in hand. "We have no Talleyrand," says the President, "but we have Delcassé, and he possesses both subtlety and audacity, besides a good amount of useful cynicism and sound judgment. And he is as cool-headed as he is cautious."

September 27th. After the Cabinet Council, the President tells me that yesterday Sir Edmund Monson, the British Ambassador, read to Delcassé a message from the Sirdar. It appears that the latter reached Fashoda eight days ago. Marchand has been there since July 10th with a few companions and some 120 Senegalese. From other sources come further details. Kitchener congratulated Captain Marchand on his great journey, then requested him to haul down the

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French flag. Marchand refused, of course, to comply with such a demand without instructions from his Government. The Sirdar quietly left him and hoisted the British flag and the Egyptian flag, side by side, south of Marchand's fortified camp. Then he returned to Khartum, leaving a strong garrison at Fashoda, in charge of a colonel.

"All we can do now," says the President, "is to await Marchand's report. . . . The trouble is if it comes through the Bahr-el-Ghazal and the Congo, months will elapse before it reaches us. Meanwhile Delcassé is communicating with Sir Edmund Monson. We stand firm. We will not evacuate Fashoda, come what may!"

October 1st–7th. A number of English newspapers have already sent France an ultimatum, but the English Government is calmer, so far. A most amazing event is the publication in England of a blue-book on the Fashoda question, at a time when the negotiations have already begun, but the President informs me that "Delcassé has found a very simple counter-move; we will publish a yellow-book in reply," and he adds: "The letters which Delcassé and the British Ambassador exchange already show that war is brewing. . . . But whatever England's hostility—and it is clear that England does not wish to negotiate until Marchand has evacuated Fashoda—we will not yield."

"And what about Marchand?"

"Delcassé has suggested that Marchand's report be sent *viâ* Khartum and Cairo. It will soon reach Paris that way. . . . By the way, I dine with Count Witte to-morrow, the 8th, at Rambouillet. . . ."

October 10th. "Well, any result?" I ask the President.

"No. Witte spoke little about Russia. But he said France should avoid all wars, just now, and above all, a war with England; and I knew what he meant. However, we shall see whether Russia will assist us or not. . . ."

Baratier, Marchand's companion, is on his way to Cairo with the famous report.

Fashoda does not monopolise public attention. The Dreyfus dispute waxes hotter than ever. Most of the newspapers

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contain nothing but scurrility and abuse. Some deliberately confuse the Fashoda affair and the Dreyfus affair. . . . Rochefort writes in the *Intransigeant:* "I should not be surprised if the English took advantage of the cowardice of our Government in order to seize Devil's Isle and free the traitor Dreyfus, whom they love so much!"

The air of Paris is thick with ominous symptoms. The various "parties" which battle together employ the same despicable methods, use the same vocabulary, a vocabulary wherein the word "traitor" is almost mild and courteous compared with some of the expressions used. There is a general orgy of vile abuse, in which Dreyfusards and Anti-Dreyfusards alike join hysterically. Alas! That worthy men—the so-called "intellectuals" and those just and clear-headed persons who advocate Revision because the law has been transgressed—are so few and far between.

October 16th. Félix Faure, during the last week, has been unusually mysterious in his ways. I know what he calls his "great scheme," but I have hardly thought him to be quite in earnest about it. Judging by his character I thought he would reconnoitre before attempting to achieve his aim. He has completely failed at the outset and he now admits it. Convinced that the French nation as a whole is thoroughly tired of the Dreyfus agitation, and that the hopelessly perturbed state of the country is a national calamity, he thought the only remedy to be a kind of *coup d'état.* His plan is, or rather was, this: With the assistance of the army—for he would obtain, or rely upon, the support of many prominent generals—Félix Faure wanted to make the Presidency independent of the Parliament, and establish a military Government. . . . A bold scheme, but one which was doomed to failure, for Félix Faure has not the necessary qualities, and there is no Augereau amongst his military friends, the present Parliament is quite unlike the Corps Legislatif of 1797, and the army cannot be compared in any way with the omnipotent soldiery of Bonaparte's days.

Indiscretions have been committed, and certain journals here and abroad are mentioning the *coup,* but they dismiss it as a

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further tale to be added to the abnormal mass of political legends, exaggerations, and gossip, which for a year past has been growing up in the overheated atmosphere that is stifling France.

And this is perhaps the best thing that could possibly happen. A *coup d'état* is only excusable when it succeeds.

An aged and intimate friend comes to the President and comforts him: "You are a foolhardy patriot; you mean and you meant well, and your scheme was not selfish like the plots which the 'Pretenders' are daily hatching. There is one consolation for you at least: there is no man capable of a *coup d'état* just now. The Duke of Orleans has the poorest of advisers, and Prince Victor has no confidence in himself!"

October 20th. Count Muravieff has been in Paris during the past few days. The Count had a long conversation with Delcassé three days ago, and dined with the President last night. Russia, it appears, thinks that war would be against the interests of France. "If there is to be a war between France and England, we cannot rely on Russia. The Government in St. Petersburg thinks that we should be ill-advised in allowing ourselves to be dragged into an absurd war with England, especially over that Sudanese swamp, Fashoda. . . ." Moreover, Count Muravieff tactfully hinted at the lukewarmness of France towards Russia. "To-day," he remarked cheerfully, and at the same time pointedly, "Russia has only two zealous friends in France: yourself and M. Delcassé."

And it was Muravieff, the Russian Foreign Secretary, and Hanotaux, French Minister of Foreign Affairs, who before Félix Faure signed the Franco-Russian Alliance in St. Petersburg on August 24th last year!

"And how are the negotiations with England proceeding?" I ask.

"They are practically at a standstill. England will discuss nothing more until Marchand has left Fashoda. . . . Meanwhile, feverish activity prevails in our dockyards; our fleet is coaling and being supplied with everything necessary. Our admirals have secret instructions. We are preparing to face all contingencies. Lockroy, the Minister for the Navy, is wonderfully busy. . . ."

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A large map of the world is unfolded on the President's table. He irritably wipes out the pencil mark he made a few days ago at the spot on the Indian border where he thought Russia might perhaps attack India. There are other blue marks on either side of the Channel, in the Mediterranean, in Africa. . . . For a long time we bend over the map and talk. But as the probabilities become clearer, more tangible, as it were, I realise that we are almost forgetting Fashoda, and Marchand on whom our attention should be riveted. What can be done for him? How can France go to his assistance? And would a war be worth while for the sake of that spot in Africa? Is a war ever worth while? What benefits would France derive from a war with England? And would France win? Where? How? . . .

I beg the President to see things in their right proportions, and I advise him to avoid war. War or no war does not depend upon him, of course, but there are so many ways of precipitating events, of rousing public feeling . . . and so many ways of smoothing matters out and of calming a nation. . . .

October 21st. Delcassé has received an abridged report from Marchand cabled by Captain Baratier, his brave companion across Africa, who has reached Cairo from Khartum. . . .

October 23rd. A mounted municipal guardsman brings me a large envelope from the President. It is a copy of *Punch*, the famous London satirical journal. On the cover, Félix Faure has written: "*Ma chère amie*, please look at this shameful insult to France on the Fashoda question." I open the paper and see a cartoon by Sir John Tenniel. Yes, it makes one's blood boil. I reply to the President: "You are right. It is vulgar and despicable. The French are refined and witty; the English are blunt and have merely what they call a 'sense of humour.' Count Muravieff told you that an African swamp is not worth a war; I wish to add: 'Still less a cartoon.'"

The cartoon was indeed unbearably insolent and unworthy of an enlightened nation. . . . But a year later, when England was at war with the Boers, to whom the French spontaneously—and emphatically—gave their sympathy, our artists

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produced cartoons in which Queen Victoria was treated in an equally improper manner. This only proves that the most civilised and refined nation in the world sometimes forgets the most elementary notions of breeding, and fails to see that one degrades himself when he tries to degrade his enemies.

October 25th. Delcassé's Yellow Book has appeared. It contains most of the documents relating to the Fashoda, or rather the "White Nile" problem, from December 1897, to October 1898. It reveals beyond argument the truly remarkable powers of Delcassé as a shrewd yet "direct" diplomatist.

The tension between England and France is at breaking-point. Sir Edmund has sent, in the name of the British Government, what amounts to an ultimatum. The President says: "We may give up Fashoda, but we must have an outlet on the Nile. If there can be no longer any question of conquest, we must at least be enabled to facilitate our '*pénétration commerciale.*' . . . Surely, some kind of compromise is possible."

In the afternoon I go to the *Chambre des Députés*. A storm is brewing. As I reach the Palais Bourbon by the Boulevard Saint Germain I can see, and hear, on the Place de la Concorde, an immense, and howling, crowd.

The sitting cannot be considered as an historic one, but it certainly is noisy and sensational. Déroulède opens fire. Déroulède, who has more than once been called a modern Don Quixote, is an eminently sympathetic figure. One likes him because, first of all . . . he is typically French—a brave soldier, a poet, an ardent patriot, and a delightful madman to boot. He is by nature unable to do anything quietly. He would be a leader of men if he were not anxious to write a patriotic and popular epic, and he would be a great poet if he were not so keen on saving the country. He has been one of the very first advocates of an alliance with Russia, he has assisted the cause of Boulanger; he was elected a deputy at the elections last May. It seems hardly necessary to add that he is a Nationalist and a staunch Anti-Dreyfusard.

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Déroulède speaks, and what he says may be reduced to these words: The Government is . . . rotten.

And now comes the turn of Chanoine, the Minister of War. He may be a first-class general, but he certainly is a third-rate orator and politician. In a stern manner, with a knitted brow and a sweeping gesture, he asserts that he has the same opinion as his predecessor in the Dreyfus case. The House applauds. . . . Then, he adds, with a wonderful instinct for doing the wrong thing: "I resign!"

The Prime Minister, the unfortunate and exhausted Brisson, declares that the "Government wishes to deliberate. . . ." He returns with his colleagues—less Chanoine, of course—and tells the Chambre that a provisional War Minister will be appointed. A general discussion ensues. . . . Two-thirds of the House are obviously hostile to the Government. Brisson asks for the usual but often dangerous vote of confidence. The majority is against it and . . . the Cabinet falls.

I rush to the Elysée and give Félix Faure my impressions of an eventful sitting. . . . He tells me that General Chanoine, after announcing his resignation in the Chambre, came to hand it to him.

"Of course, I refused to receive him. He might at least have known that he should have sent in his resignation to the Prime Minister. . . . Between ourselves, I am rather pleased to be rid of Brisson. He makes an excellent President of the Chambre, for he is impartial, impressive and venerable, but as a Premier, or even as a Minister, he is quite hopeless, in spite of his integrity and his general knowledge of politics. . . . So here I am, looking once more for a man able to form a Cabinet. Four months ago I was doing the identical thing. To-morrow I shall summon the President and Vice-Presidents of the Chambre and the Senate. In any case I shall retain Delcassé for the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. We must at least have *one* man who knows his business in the Cabinet."

The mention of Delcassé inevitably leads back to Fashoda.

"The *Sénégal* has reached Marseilles, the President tells

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me. Sir Herbert Kitchener and Captain Baratier are on board!"

October 27th. "What about Baratier . . . and Marchand?" I ask Félix Faure.

"Baratier is closeted with Delcassé. Marchand will leave Fashoda for Cairo, where he will await the instructions of the Government. England is more impatient than ever."

October 28th–30th. The game is up. . . . Monson's attitude and words leave no room for hope of a conciliatory settlement. . . . Unless, of course, we evacuate Fashoda. . . .

I have never seen Félix Faure so bitterly dejected. That vast African Empire was one of his most cherished dreams. . . .

France will lose none of her prestige, but it is clear that she will give way. . . . Silently, we put together various documents, and work at the "Memoirs."

Dupuy, once a professor of philosophy, who has twice before been Prime Minister, has consented to form a Cabinet. De Freycinet, a civilian, becomes Minister of War. Dupuy is strongly in favour of the "Revision." . . . And Dupuy was Prime Minister when Dreyfus was condemned! Fate has strange whims.

November 1st–4th. Marchand has reached Cairo from Fashoda, Baratier has reached Cairo from Paris. France has "officially" given up Fashoda. The long-drawn-out crisis, during which war with England has been so near, is at an end. . . . The humiliation brings tears to Félix Faure's eyes. . . . "And yet, it was inevitable that we should yield. Our fleet is too inefficient, the White Nile is too far, our position at Fashoda was untenable, alas. . . . Delcassé has acted wisely. War is averted . . . are you satisfied?"

"You know I am; but I cannot help thinking of Marchand and his brave companions. What must be their feelings!"

November 12th. Marchand and Baratier leave Cairo for Fashoda. From there, they will go south to Sobat, and then travel eastward, through Abyssinia, to Jibuti, whence they will sail for France. At least, the humiliation of retreating through Egypt will be spared them. The relations between

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England and France are gradually becoming more normal. Monson and Delcassé met three days ago . . . after a separation which had lasted nearly two weeks!

November 15–30. The attention of France is entirely focussed on the Dreyfus affair and the Picquart trial. How General Zurlinden can seriously accuse the Colonel of being a forger and a traitor passes my understanding.

December 7th. Last night Sir Edmund Monson spoke at the Annual Banquet of the British Chamber of Commerce, held at the Hotel Continental.

Just as I am reading a report of the speech, the insolence of which is phenomenal, the President telephones:

"Have you ever heard of anything more arrogant, more improper, than Monson's speech? The Fashoda incident is closed, but because the Government intend organising some schools in the Sudan, Monson gives it an impudent lesson, and tells our Ministers what they must do. . . . And that . . . on French soil, in Paris! And he is an Ambassador! . . ."

"Yes, the Marquis of Dufferin was a different man."

We then talked about the political situation. Félix Faure still repudiates the thought of "Revision," though far less strongly than before the Henry tragedy.

In the evening we meet at the Opéra Comique. A *spectacle de gala* is given, as this was the opening night of the new building (the former Opéra Comique had been burned down several years before). The programme entirely devoted to French music, includes one act of Gounod's "Mireille," one of "Carmen," and one of Massenet's "Manon."

December 15th–31st. The news has come that Marchand left Fashoda on the eleventh. So the last scene of that poignant drama has been played. . . .

The "Revision" is being discussed in the Chamber. The Cour de Cassation has telegraphed to a magistrate at Cayenne a list of questions which he is to put to Dreyfus.

January 1st, 1899–February 10th. The President puts in order a number of documents and notes relating to the Dreyfus and Fashoda affairs and sends them to me. I am laid up with peritonitis. My mother is staying with me. The Beau-

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court estate was sold nearly two years ago, and she came to live in Paris, but I have had a villa built for my mother, close to the old home, and when I am better she will go back there and live once more in her dear Beaucourt. The President telephones to me two or three times a day.

Delcassé, on January 23rd, makes a remarkable speech in the Chamber on the Fashoda affair, in which he accepted full responsibility for all that took place, explaining that the Marchand "Mission" was the direct outcome of the Liotard expedition which he had himself organised when Minister of the colonies. The chief points of the speech are: Marchand started on his mission long before the Anglo-Egyptian army entered upon the conquest of the Sudan—France years before had made it clear that she did not recognise the "White Nile" valley as being in the sphere of British influence—France could not expose her fleet, army and prestige, in what would appear to the majority of nations as an "inexplicable adventure."

At the beginning of February, my younger sister marries. I am still very weak, but manage to attend the wedding. A day or two afterwards, I drive to the Elysée, where I remain a few minutes with Félix Faure. He shows me a letter from the Czar which Prince Urusoff handed to him an hour ago, and two paintings representing the arrival of the President at Kronstadt, also sent by the Russian Emperor.

The Dreyfus affair is proceeding in the same more or less illegal manner. The great struggle, however, is no longer between Dreyfusards and Anti-Dreyfusards, but between the Republic and the enemies of the Republic, between Radicals and Socialists on the one hand, and the "reactionaries, Royalists" and "Anti-Semites" on the other. All kinds of leagues are springing up. Early in January, François Coppée with Brunetière, the editor of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, and others, found the *Patrie Française* league, which staunchly upholds the Army against all Dreyfusards. . . . There are constant rumours of military plots. . . .

Here may be briefly stated the end of the Dreyfus affair.

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Brisson had remitted the case to the Cour de Cassation—which comprises three divisions (criminal court, civil court, and court of petitions). But when it became known that the criminal division which had charge of the appeal had found that there had been a gross miscarriage of justice, and would decide in favour of Revision, Dupuy proposed and made the Chamber accept a law by which the momentous decision was to be left to the three decisions. This was, of course, in the hope that in the whole court a majority would be found against Dreyfus.

February 10th, 1899. (President Faure died February 16th). The Cour de Cassation decided for a fresh trial by court-martial. Dupuy resigned (June). Dreyfus was brought back from Devil's Isle, was tried at Rennes, found guilty but with "extenuating circumstances," sentenced to ten years' imprisonment and recommended to mercy. A fantastic verdict. Captain Dreyfus was pardoned, set free and at last fully rehabilitated after having suffered so long for crimes evidently committed by others.

The *Affaire Dreyfus* was used by all parties to achieve their particular aims. Some used it to wage war against Semitism, some war against the Republic, others against Socialism, others against the Army, and yet others against Clericalism. . . . Hundreds of men found in it a way of achieving notoriety, or of satisfying their private ambitions. Thousands fished in troubled waters. The Duke of Orleans, heir to King Louis-Philippe, inundated the country with manifestoes, and Prince Victor Napoleon, with the faithful Marquis de Girardin, tried to work up some Bonapartist enthusiasm. Perhaps the strangest phenomenon of all in that strange time was the Anti-Dreyfusard attitude of the Jewish *élite*. . . . As for President Faure, it can only be said that he was absolutely sincere in his conviction of Dreyfus's guilt, in his belief that the court-martial which condemned the Captain had passed judgment according to their conscience, and had not exceeded their rights, and finally that France would be much worse for a "Revision" of the case. Events proved that he was wrong and that France is able to recover from blows and agitation

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which would cripple other nations less endowed with vitality, elasticity, and idealism,

The Dreyfus affair was President Faure's "nightmare," the Fashoda incident his "shattered dream." Before closing this chapter, the only one in the book dealing with politics, I must mention the treaty with Lord Salisbury wherein were defined the English and the French "sphere of influence" in the Niger region, and in which France gave up the Nile (March 1899).

And now, as I have reviewed the chief episodes of the Fashoda affair, a few words may be deemed necessary about the man who piloted the vessel of French Foreign Policy during that dangerous crisis, and who since then has revealed himself, on many other occasions, as a very able diplomatist and organiser.

Delcassé was Minister for Foreign Affairs for seven years, from 1898 till 1905—a momentous period in the history of modern France. In the most difficult and dangerous circumstances, Delcassé was always cool and collected, and no one could ever "read" this little dark, round-eyed man, with a moustache bristling out on either side like a cat's whiskers, who makes few gestures, never loses his temper, forces his interrogators to ask their question twice, and speaks only when he chooses . . . which is seldom. Félix Faure, who fully appreciated his great merits, used to say: "He is too trenchant and too secretive for my taste. His coolness is highly provoking. I cordially dislike him, and I am aware that he is not very fond of me; but I have the utmost confidence in his judgment, although this man of mystery is too much of an autocratic ruler. When he speaks in the Chamber, the deputies listen to him in religious silence, and he is the Minister who is questioned least. He has succeeded in making it generally understood that he does the right thing, in his own way, and that he must be left alone. He guides the destiny of the country, and he is—almost—the only one to know when France is on the brink of war. . . . But I cannot deny that he is a born diplomatist. Had Talleyrand or Metternich brought him up he would no doubt be rather more refined in manner and method, and have learned a little more subtlety, but I do not think he would have acquired much more authority or ability."

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When, in 1905, he fell, because the German Emperor, who had just been dazzling Tangiers with Imperial pomp, and making France uneasy about the Moroccan problem, demanded the resignation of the one man whom he feared in France—the one man who did not fear him—no insult was spared Delcassé, who had rendered so many services to the country, had worked for the development of our colonies and the improvement of our navy, and had restored France to her rightful place in European diplomacy. Delcassé was now considered as a bellicose maniac who had twice humiliated the nation, at Fashoda, and in Morocco.

When, however, Delcassé became Minister of the Navy, his return to power was hailed with as much satisfaction as his fall. His pleasure at being back in office must have been heightened by his sense of humour, which is great.

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CHAPTER VIII

THE MYSTERIOUS PEARL NECKLACE—THE DEATH OF FÉLIX FAURE

President Faure, during the summer of 1898, presented me with a pearl necklace, which afterwards played such a strange part in my life that I will relate the story of the gift and of what followed, with as many details as my memory can recall, for probably the necklace, as well as the President's papers, had something to do with the mysterious tragedy of the Impasse Ronsin.

On several occasions the President expressed the wish that I should accept a token of his warm friendship. He had already given me a brooch, made by Lalique, in the three French colours—a cornflower, a marguerite, and a poppy—and a comb by Lalique, which was a work of art, but so heavy that I seldom wore it. Félix Faure said one day: "Since that comb is of no use to you, you must allow me to offer you some pearls. I know a certain pearl necklace which is unique, and by purchasing it I shall be rendering a friend a very great service. You must promise to accept it, if only for that reason!"

The President gave me no further information about the necklace or his friend. Two or three days afterwards I was dining at the Elysée. Bonnat was among the President's guests, also M. Le Gall, "general secretary of the Elysée," and Major Lamy, a distinguished officer who was about to start on a dangerous mission in Africa. After dinner, I sang a number of songs, accompanying myself at the piano. Whilst turning the pages of the music, Félix Faure again mentioned the "surprise" he had in store for me. The

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next day, Major Lamy, whom I knew well, and who had often called on me, came to bid me good-bye. He was leaving France. . . . He carried a large bouquet, which he said the President begged me to accept. I undid the white wrapper, and found, amongst the orchids, a green jewel-case lined with white satin, and containing a large gold box. I had some trouble in unfastening the lid, and when at last it came open, the "surprise" fell on the floor; it was a marvellous necklace of five rows of pearls.

After Lamy had gone I wrote to the President that I could on no account accept such a sumptuous gift, and although the next day, when I called on him at the Elysée, he beseeched me with almost painful insistence to keep the pearls, I said I would return the necklace on my next visit to the Elysée.

Two days later the President sent for me. He was pale and perturbed, and restlessly paced his study. . . . It was clear that he had something of the highest importance to tell me, but could not make up his mind to speak. At last he began: "I am more distressed than you can imagine, . . . Something dreadful has happened. . . . It is about that necklace. I bought it from a friend, a man of the highest rank. I wished to help him out of a difficulty, and now I hear that, against my will, I am mixed up in a scandal which, if it were disclosed, would utterly ruin me. . . . I should have instantly to resign and even to leave the country. It is a most complicated and unheard-of affair. And yet, I bought the pearls to oblige that friend, who, of course, was no more aware than myself of the sudden complications which have arisen. He has been deceived . . . and I am lost if anything leaks out. I can tell you nothing more. I have not the right to discuss this terrible affair. No one must even know of it. . . . I entreat you to keep the necklace in your house. No one can ever suspect that you possess it. But you must not wear it at present, or show it to any one. . . . Has any of your friends or a member of your family seen it?"

"No . . . for as you know, I decided to return it to you; I could not wear it; it is too valuable. People would wonder

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where it came from. . . . Besides, there are not many such necklaces in the world. The pearls are so perfect and large. . . ."

"Has any one asked you any questions?"

"Yes. . . . After a dinner yesterday, M. B., the Attorney-General, asked me casually if it were true that 'I had been presented with a £20,000 necklace.' . . . The figure startled me, also the fact that M. B. should have heard about the pearls. But I replied that I was not young enough to listen to fairy tales, and the Attorney-General remarked: 'I thought the tale was not true.' . . . And now," I added, "I shall drive home and return the pearls to you. I intended to do so in any case, but after what you have just told me, it is impossible for me to keep them an hour longer. I only wish I had brought them with me."

Félix Faure turned ghastly pale: "Do you wish to ruin me? Must I be dragged into a scandal that may lead to calamities such as I cannot even bear to think of? I beseech you to keep them. You risk absolutely nothing. When I am no longer President things may alter in time, and I may find a way out of the difficulty. . . . The pearls are yours, keep them, but if you ever wish to get rid of them, sell them one by one. . . ."

"You frighten me. . . . Can I not know the story of the necklace?"

"It is impossible. Don't ask me any questions. . . ."

I was angry. I longed to know the truth. I wanted to know who had laid a trap for the President and his friend "of the highest rank." I suggested that the necklace had belonged to some lady, who, in need of a large sum of money, had sold it, and that her husband, an important personage, noticing the disappearance of the pearls had threatened to make a scandal. . . .

The President smiled bitterly . . .: "Would that that were the truth! For in that case, I should have at once told you everything, asked you for the pearls, and returned them to the lady. . . . And you would have allowed me to replace the necklace by some other jewel. . . . No, alas, it is not

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that. The friend in question is a man. . . . And the secret is his more than it is mine."

"Perhaps," I went on, "the necklace was stolen! The important personage, your friend, acquired it without knowing that. Then he gambled, lost heavily, and sold the pearls to you? Perhaps they are blackmailing him . . .!"

"No, no. . . . In that case, too, the simplest thing would be to hand back the pearls. . . ."

"Is it a royal jewel?" I asked. "Would the scandal be a diplomatic one? . . ."

Félix Faure replied: "You are utterly wrong, and I swear that I cannot, must not, tell you the truth. . . . I am a man of the world and ever since I discovered what I did, I have been looking for a way out of this unspeakable catastrophe that threatens my friend, myself, and . . . others, perhaps others, if the story of the necklace becomes known. There is but one way of avoiding all trouble, you must keep these pearls."

"And if I refuse?"

The President looked me straight in the eyes. His lips were trembling and his face was distorted. "For God's sake, don't do that!" he said.

His distress was so evident that I ceased to question him. For an hour I tried to forget the necklace, and I sorted various papers that might be useful for the "Memoirs." Before leaving the Elysée, however, I could not refrain from talking once more about the pearls.

"I cannot solve this problem, and it irritates me beyond expression. I know you are incapable of anything dishonest, and I am sure you would never drag me into anything that might harm me. Still, why could you not entrust the necklace to some one else?"

"Because I trust no one else as much as I do you."

"Why not hide it here?"

"It might be found."

"Why not destroy it, bury it, throw it in the Seine?" . . .

"I might be seen. Any one doing such a thing might be seen. Besides, why throw away a small fortune, when in a few

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months' time the storm may have blown over, matters may have been adjusted in some miraculous way, and you can wear the necklace, or sell it. I have paid for it; it is yours now. There is nothing irregular. . . . Only, it so happened that there would be a great scandal—even something worse than scandal—if it were known that I, President of the Republic, and the 'personage' I have told you of, were concerned in this necklace affair, though only in a perfectly innocent manner. And now, I beg you, do please let the pearls rest in safety in your house, and if you can, never mention them to me again until I am able to tell you that all danger is over."

All this was spoken with such earnestness and gravity that I gave up trying to solve the mystery . . . that day.

Many and many a time afterwards, I asked the President if he would take the necklace from me. I told him what anxiety it caused me, not so much on account of its value as because of the mystery attached to it. . . . But his reply was ever the same: "Forget that necklace. It is yours. If you have any friendship for me, don't speak to me about it. . . . You run no risks whatever. . . . All will soon be well. . . ."

Shortly after the President's death I found out that that was not so.

During the morning of February 16th, 1899, M. Le Gall, "general secretary" at the Elysée, telephoned to me to say that the President was most anxious to see me. I replied that I would call the next day, because I was not very well, and, besides, I had promised Bonnat to sit for my portrait, during the afternoon. Bonnat had given up all his appointments in order to get on with the portrait which, owing to my illness, had not been touched for many weeks. I did not intend to call at the Elysée afterwards, because sitting to a painter is rather fatiguing, especially when one has only just recovered from a serious illness.

I lunched at home. Just as I was about to sit at the table the telephone bell rang, and I was told that the President himself wished to speak to me. Would I kindly hang on? A few seconds after I heard the voice of Félix Faure: "I must

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THE GOLD BOX IN WHICH PRESIDENT FAURE
SENT ME THE PEARL NECKLACE

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see you at all costs to-day; I wish to hand you something . . . I don't feel quite myself. . . . By the way, I have noticed, these past few days, that you were quite right in your suspicions. Some one has been rummaging amongst my private papers. It is essential that you should fetch those I have had to write without you lately."

He stopped to catch his breath, and then continued: "I thought you looked very pale when you last came here. . . . But if you can manage to sit for your portrait at Bonnat's, you ought to try to give me a few minutes."

I replied: "If I don't feel too tired I will come, just for a moment, to take the papers you talk about and to beseech you to look more seriously after your health. You, too, looked quite out of sorts at the Elysée. . . ."

His voice was different from his usual voice; it was weak, lacked clearness. I told him so, and he remarked: "You are right; this *affaire* is killing me. I have more enemies than ever before, and then, during your absence, I have lived too well, perhaps. . . ."

He seemed to hesitate, and finally repeated: "Do come this afternoon, I entreat you. . . ."

After lunch I went to Bonnat. During the afternoon the telephone bell rang, and I was told that the President absolutely insisted that I should call on him soon without fail. . . . I am sure he must have been at the Elysée at the time, and I cannot see, therefore, how the President could have become suddenly ill at the house of a friend, that afternoon, and have been hurriedly driven back to the Elysée in a landau, as certain papers declared afterwards. At any rate, if Félix Faure went out that afternoon, he never told me, when I met him. . .

After the sitting I felt tired, and made up my mind not to go to the Elysée. Outside, however, I remembered the insistence of the President and drove to the Palace. I entered by the door in the Rue du Colisée. I saw the President standing at the open window near the little waiting-room. Blondel, his private secretary, was with him. I was very much struck by the President's pallor. It was not dark yet; it must have been about five o'clock.

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As soon as I entered, he said to me, whilst Blondel politely withdrew: "There is something wrong with me. Ah! why have you not been around me all these days? I have lost control of myself . . . I am so tired of all these intrigues and hopeless complications in the Dreyfus case. I have tried to forget my worries, and have been taking a great deal of that drug . . . which I ought never to touch. I have done so even this afternoon."

He seemed to conceal something from me, probably a visit which he dared not confess to me.

The blue *petit salon*, where he usually received me, and where we always wrote his memoirs, was in the hands of the decorators. So he took me to a room where I had never been before, close to M. Le Gall's study. To my great surprise, M. Le Gall was not in, but the faithful Blondel was sitting in the study. The door leading to it was open, for the President complained that he could not breathe easily, and wanted as much air as possible. I was not too alarmed, for, though unusually pale, the President did not look worse than I had seen him look on other occasions, a few hours after he had been indulging in that favourite—and dangerous—drug of his.

"I really must look after my health," he said, "and give up this 'poison.' . . . And then, I must try to be fit for the great ball we are so soon to have here."

I asked him how he had used his time that day, and he told me that he had received a few important personages . . . and also a lady friend who had done her utmost to influence him in regard to the Dreyfus affair. I knew her well, and the President had told me more than once that this lady was most anxious that her husband should become a Minister.

Suddenly the President exclaimed: "I am stifling. . . . I feel dizzy." I called Blondel. After a while the President said: "It will be all right. . . . I shall be all right in a minute."

Blondel and I helped him to walk to the door of his study. The President looked a little better now. Turning to me he said: "The trouble is over; I am going to rest a little. . . . I'll take no more of that wretched drug, I promise you—I

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swear it. . . . Make yourself beautiful for the ball; I have sent you the tickets you asked for. I'll telephone to you to-morrow morning. Promise me to come to-morrow morning to the Bois with Marthe if the weather is as splendid as it is to-day." Then, seeing I was not carrying the bundle of documents he had asked me to take home, he added: "Don't forget the parcel . . . *au revoir*. . . ."

Thereupon he entered his study, unassisted.

I walked to the little waiting-room with Blondel and took the parcel of papers. Blondel accompanied me to the door. But as I did not wish the President to remain alone on account of his ill-health, and because M. Le Gall was not there, I said to Blondel: "Don't trouble to let me out. I will leave the Elysée by the main door. Please hurry back to the President, for he seems far from well. It would be wise, perhaps, to send for a doctor. . . ."

I left the Palace by the main gate in the Rue Saint Honoré. As soon as I was outside I realised that I was being shadowed as I had been so often before. But my faithful "agent" was there. I walked along the Avenue Marigny, reached the Champs Elysée, and called a *fiacre*. It was about six o'clock when I reached the Impasse Ronsin.

Towards midnight (I had been in bed for some time), I was awakened by the bell of the telephone in my room. It was M. Bordelongue, a director in the Ministry of *Postes et Telegraphes*, and an old friend.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

And then I heard the news, the dreadful news: "The President is dead."

I could not believe what I heard. "It's impossible," I exclaimed. "I saw him to-day. He was tired, weak, upset, but there seemed to be nothing particularly wrong with his health." I asked Bordelongue all kinds of questions, but he merely replied: "Nothing is known. They say the President died of an apoplectic stroke."

The next morning at six o'clock I was told that my faithful "agent" wished to see me on a matter of importance. This

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"agent" did not belong to the *Sûreté*, or to the Ministry of the Interior, but was a private detective who had been specially selected and appointed by Félix Faure to keep guard over me wherever I went, and see that no harm befell me. (It should be remembered that during the Dreyfus affair Paris was in such a state of blind excitement and mad passion that in order to know the doings of certain persons, detectives were everywhere engaged. Indeed, before Félix Faure's mysterious death, France lived in conditions which reminded one to some extent of those that prevailed in Venice in the dreaded days of the Council of Ten.)

I guessed what the man came about, so I hastily dressed and met him.

"Ah! Madame, I see you know the news. . . . There's some mystery in the President's death. They say he died of congestion of the brain, but I hear his agony lasted several hours. Madame Faure and her daughter only came at the last moment. . . . I am myself being shadowed, and it will be better if I do not call again. . . . But you know my address and if at any time I can be of some use to you I beseech you to apply to me."

The man was deeply moved, and so was I. I had lost my best friend; he had lost a good master. . . . I never saw him again except on one occasion. That was ten years later, a few days after the murder of my husband and my mother. I was lying dangerously ill in bed at Count d'Arlon's house, when a card was brought to me with a name which I did not know, and I was about to refuse to see the person who had sent up the card when I recognised the handwriting of a few hastily scribbled words which begged me to receive the writer. The "agent" of Félix Faure's days entered my room, but I almost failed to recognise him, so cleverly had he disguised himself.

"Forgive me for intruding, Madame," he muttered, "but I thought it was my duty to tell you this. As soon as you are well enough to travel, leave Paris. Go anywhere in the country and try to forget the awful tragedy. At any rate, move not a finger, whatever happens. Somehow, I think the

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murderers will never be found. I daresay you will have no peace until they are arrested. But I beseech you to do nothing . . . for, whatever you may do, those who killed your mother and your husband will not be arrested. The death of M. Steinheil and Mme. Japy will remain as mysterious as that of President Faure."

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CHAPTER IX

AFTER PRESIDENT FAURE'S DEATH: THE DOCUMENTS—THE NECKLACE

I HAD been seriously ill for six weeks and had only just recovered when the death of Félix Faure occurred. The shock caused a relapse, and I was unable to attend the President's funeral, which took place on Thursday, February 23rd.

I had lost a great friend, and France a great patriot. It was said that President Faure was a lighthearted optimist, that he had no control worth speaking of over the various political parties striving around him, and finally that he was a mere figure-head, a chief of State, but not a statesman—an ornamental President rather than a man of great ideas or a man of action.

It cannot be denied that Félix Faure was astoundingly fortunate and that when he saw that things always "went well" with him, he became almost irritatingly self-confident and was perhaps inclined to be fastidious in the performance of his Presidential duties. He loved pageantry, and he revelled in the pomp and circumstance of his office, especially when he came in close contest with a King or an Emperor. He looked the part of "The First Magistrate of the Country" to perfection, being tall, handsome, refined in manner, and dignified to the verge of aloofness. But he had many worthy qualities: he was endowed with much common sense—a quality which too many lacked in France during the time of the *Affaire Dreyfus*—and he was an ardent—a zealous, patriot. He had a rare gift of sympathy, and there can be no doubt that he considerably increased the prestige of France during his Presi-

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Vous êtes prié d'assister au Service anniversaire qui sera célébré le Vendredi 16 Février 1900, à onze heures du matin, en l'Eglise de la Madeleine, à la mémoire de

Monsieur Félix Faure,

Président de la République Française.

De la part de Madame Félix Faure,
de Mademoiselle Lucie Félix Faure, et de Monsieur et Madame René Berger.

NEF : Porte latérale de gauche. Cette carte devra être présentée à l'entrée de l'Eglise.

Madame Steinheil

INVITATION TO THE FELIX FAURE "IN MEMORIAM" SERVICE

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dency, in spite of his inexplicable attitude in the Dreyfus affair, in spite of the Fashoda humiliation, and in spite of Zola's letter, "I accuse," and the fierce attacks of Clémenceau, Reinach, Jaurès, and many others. He had more enemies than any President ever had, including Delcassé, himself another staunch Dreyfusard, in whose talents as a diplomatist he had such confidence. Félix Faure had bitter enemies not only in the Cabinets which succeeded one another with such "eloquent" rapidity during his Presidency, but even in his own *entourage* at the Elysée.

He loved the army. He had fought bravely during the war with Germany; he believed in the absolute righteousness of the court-martial which tried Dreyfus, and he did his utmost to prevent a "Revision" of the trial. He was a downright honest and sincere man, and believed he was working for the greatness of the country he loved so ardently.

Human malignity knows no limit or pity. Less than twenty-four hours after the death of the President, a number of newspapers coolly suggested that Félix Faure had been poisoned by a certain Protestant friend of his, a Mme. S. Others said by an actress whose name began with S, and others by a Jewish lady. But they mostly pointed to me as the murderess of Félix Faure, although in very cautious and veiled terms, and without ever giving my name. I had called at the Elysée during the afternoon of February 16th. The whole tragedy seemed quite clear . . . to certain people. I had been appointed by some secret committee of Dreyfusards, on account of the President's sympathy for me, to "suppress" the man who was supposed to be the great stumbling block in the way of the "Revision." Being ill and worn, I had no inclination to read the newspapers during those days, and might always have ignored those shameless rumours, but hundreds of kind souls sent me the cuttings containing the venomous allusions, and at the same time, shoals of anonymous letters reached me, in which assassin, poisoner, Lucretia, and Brinvilliers were perhaps the least cruel and offensive epithets hurled at me. Certain writers declared that if I had not killed

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the President, at least I knew when he died and who had killed him, and that dire calamities would befall me unless I revealed the name. A few letters mentioned the papers of Félix Faure, and said that if I knew where they were and could obtain possession of them, I ought to publish them, because their publication would serve the purposes of the Anti-Dreyfusards to which party I no doubt belonged, since my great friend the President had never shown any sympathy with the champions of the "traitor." Other letters entreated me to serve the Dreyfusards by burning such documents as might compromise their cause, whilst others, also originating from Dreyfusards, suggested that I should hand the papers to "So-and-so," who would examine them and decide which ought to be published. . . . And each letter ended with vile threats if I did not follow the anonymous writer's advice! . . .

In those painful hours, the trust and sympathy of a number of friends, Bonnat the chief amongst them, helped me to overcome the shame which oppressed me. I received tactful messages of sincere sympathy from hundreds of persons who had been revolted by this infamous press campaign. There also came a charming letter from Mlle. Lucie Faure, to whom I had sent my condolences on the death of her beloved father, at the same time promising to assist her, as in the past, in her charitable works, especially the "Fraternal Legion of the Children of France."

But all these messages of sympathy did not put an end to the insinuations in certain journals. The very horror of them gave me strength. I forgot my physical sufferings and went from one magistrate to another among my acquaintances. All told me that since my name was not mentioned it would be impossible to prosecute the offending papers, and that since the letters I received were anonymous, and written either in capitals or with the left hand, it would be most difficult to trace those who had sent them to me. True, one newspaper had mentioned the "wife of a painter," but there were scores of married painters whose name began with the letter S. The only wise policy was for me to ignore all insults and threats. The absurd rumours would soon die out, and the anonymous

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letters would soon cease to reach me. Besides it was, all of it, simply an indirect result of the Dreyfus agitation which aroused the worst passions and caused some men to stop at nothing.

I consulted M. P., a "State Councillor," and an old friend of mine about the documents. Should I keep them, send them to Mme. Faure, or destroy them?

M. P. hesitated, and at last replied: "If the papers were in my possession and had been entrusted to me by the late President, I do not think I should venture to destroy them. They might be useful. . . . But I should certainly hide them in a safe place at home. . . . By the way, who, besides me, knows that you wrote those memoirs with the President, and that they are in your possession?"

"It is difficult to answer. There are a few persons who saw Félix Faure writing with me at the Elysée, and on a few occasions I have been followed when leaving the Palace with a bundle of papers under my arm. . . ."

"Evidently some indiscretion has been committed. But I should not take any notice. The President was perfectly free to write the more or less 'secret' story of the Third Republic, and with whomsoever he chose. He was at liberty to entrust those papers to your care or to give them to you, and you are fully entitled to keep them. . . . At any rate, I should keep them if I were you."

The next morning my valet came to say that M. Blondel (Félix Faure's private secretary) wished to see me. I had just received a further batch of anonymous letters and felt greatly depressed. M. Blondel, who had been so devoted to the President and so kind to me, tried to calm me, and then said: "Let me tell you what happened after your departure from the Elysée on the fatal day, and give the President's final message to you. . . . The President sat in his study and felt much better. I sent, however, as I had promised you, for a doctor. . . . There was one at the Elysée. He came, and found the President very weak, but not, he thought, in any danger. After the doctor had left the room, the President, to my intense surprise, said: 'If I feel worse, or if, as Dr.

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Potain has often warned me, I die suddenly, I want you to see that the talisman, which she gave me and which I always wear, be handed back to Mme. Steinheil.' Shortly afterwards he began to feel bad again, and a priest was sent for. It was then about seven o'clock, I think. After he had received the priest he handed me the talisman and whispered: 'I think I am lost. . . . Let all those who cared for me forgive my enemies as I forgive them myself. . . .' Other doctors came; then Mme. Faure and her daughters. . . . Forgive me if I give you no more details. It would be too painful for you—and for me."

I had designed the talisman myself at the request of Félix Faure. It was a gold locket bearing the initials F. F. upon a diamond anchor, and was set with tiny pearls, rubies and sapphires to recall the tricolour. The word engraved upon the anchor, a friendly term, was in Russian, because the President liked everything that recalled his visit to St. Petersburg and the Alliance with Russia.

Having placed the locket in a drawer, I returned to M. Blondel and said: "Tell me the truth. You know what tragic rumours were abroad in Paris like wild-fire, soon after the death of the President. How is it then, that, if there was any suspicion of foul play, there was no autopsy? The *Journal Officiel* said: 'The President of the Republic died yesterday at 10 P.M., struck down with *apoplexie foudroyante*,' How could you reconcile that official statement of sudden death with what you have just told me; at seven o'clock the President already thought himself dying and sent for a priest. Why was there no autopsy? . . ."

"Because it was the wish of Mme. Faure, and the Premier himself agreed."

M. Blondel was deeply moved, and I shared his emotion. I realised that he could not say anything more, or had nothing more to say. . . . And we parted. . . .

The mystery of Félix Faure's death thus remained unsolved. I have more than once tried to solve it, but in vain. My opinion, however, is this: The President, as he himself admitted on the last time I saw him, had taken, or was given,

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that afternoon, and long before my flying visit to him, a large dose of his dangerous "remedy." He had often been warned that it might one day prove fatal—and it did.

It is a terrible thing to have to say, but when, a few months after the murder of my husband and my mother, I was arrested and imprisoned, the infamous accusations against me concerning the President's death were again circulated. When my counsel told me so I insisted upon a full inquiry into the matter, and M. Albanel, the judge, was appointed. . . . He made the fullest possible investigations and, I need hardly add, I was completely exonerated.

On the evening of the day after the funeral of President Faure, my husband came into my room, and closed the door carefully. He was trembling and pale. "You know," he began, "that we agreed, years ago, that, although living under the same roof, you and I should be entirely free to act as we pleased. We further agreed to discuss all matters of importance by letter. . . . But this time, I must speak to you. Something terrible has happened to-day, and we must talk about it and see how to save ourselves from disaster. . . . A man called on me and was with me for two hours in the studio. . . . Now, tell me, is it true that you possess a mass of important papers written by the late President, and is it true that you possess a most valuable pearl necklace? I know that Félix Faure presented you with a comb and a brooch, but what of those pearls? And what is the truth about the documents?"

I remained silent. My husband went on:

"The man, who talks French with a strong German accent, states that a number of times he saw you leave the Elysée with bundles of papers in your hands. On one occasion the President accompanied you to the garden-door, and before closing it said to you: 'Be careful with the documents.' As for the necklace, he has given me an exact description of it, he has told me the number of the pearls, their size and weight. . . . He says he must and will have the documents and the necklace, but he wants the necklace first. He knows its origin and

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history. If you keep it, you and I and Marthe will be ruined, he says. All kinds of dangers are threatening us. He knows the scandal in which Félix Faure was unwittingly involved, and says you must know that the matter is of the greatest gravity. If you give up the necklace, no harm will befall us, and the horrible insinuations in the newspapers will at once cease. Otherwise our position will become untenable. . . . He has said enough to make me realise that he speaks the truth. The man is no impostor. Indeed, the whole affair is so dreadful that if you don't hand me the pearls, I give you my word of honour that I shall commit suicide!"

I was dumfounded. Still, I managed to say: "That German is a rogue. He has discovered some facts about the friendship between the late President and me, and he wants to blackmail us . . . and obtain the necklace, the documents, which may be turned into money, and everything we possess."

"No," my husband replied, "he is not anxious to blackmail us, if he can obtain what we wants otherwise. As a matter of fact he is willing to buy the pearls row by row, or even pearl by pearl. But he demanded that the necklace shall never be shown or mentioned. He does not want it to be recognised, and therefore will buy at once a number of the pearls and the clasp. But the necklace must be unstrung."

"It is all very strange," I said. "The whole affair sounds like blackmail and at the same time the man seems anxious to shield some one. . . ."

"Yes, it is strange. . . . But if you don't yield to him tomorrow, and hand him at least some of the pearls and swear that he shall have the others, in time, he will do his worst, and I know enough to realise what the worst would be. . . . Now, what do you decide?"

I did not hesitate very long. I remembered the President's fear when he besought me to keep the necklace. Also I had had but little peace since those fatal pearls were in my possession. . . .

"I will talk to the man myself, and hand him some of the pearls. . . ."

"You will not see him. He came this morning only because

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MY HUSBAND, M. STEINHEIL, IN 1898

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he knew you were ill in bed; otherwise he would have made some appointment with me. . . . He will be here to-morrow. What shall I tell him?"

I fetched the necklace, unstrung the pearls—selected ten amongst the largest—and handed my husband the others.

"Do as you please with these," I said. "And tell that German that I shall keep these ten pearls. . . . Some day I may want the money that they will fetch."

The next day I heard that the man "allowed" me to keep the ten pearls, but first my husband had to swear in my name that if I ever decided to sell them, it should be to him, the German. One out of the five rows of pearls was "sold" to that mysterious individual, and the veiled libels in the newspapers ceased as if by enchantment!

Was it mere coincidence, or had the man really some power? Or had that scandalous press campaign been more or less directly his own work? Had he used it to intimidate me?

At any rate, the enigmatical German kept his promises. My husband, who had an abject fear of him, kept the pearls in his studio, and the German, who came every three or four months, insisted on seeing the pearls and then bought a few of them. He always managed to call when I was not at home, but once or twice I saw him leave the villa in the Impasse just as I entered it. He was small and dark, and had a very Jewish nose. It was winter when I saw him, and the collar of his overcoat was turned up to his ears. It was quite evident that he did not wish his face to be seen.

My husband corresponded secretly with the man, and sold, through the latter's agency, a number of pictures to various persons in Germany. The whole matter was so strange that I repeatedly attempted to drag from my husband all that he knew. I had an impression that he was aware of the origin of the necklace, and that there were some clauses in his compact with the man of which he had not acquainted me. But whenever I mentioned the German he at once ran away and shut himself up in his studio.

Two or three years after the death of Félix Faure I looked into the drawer in which the pearls were kept and found they

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had all gone, except, of course, the ten which I had put aside.

A few days later my husband said to me: "The 'German' has been again. His attitude has changed for the worse. He now demands the ten large pearls you have kept, and also the papers of President Faure."

I refused point blank. The pearls I kept in reserve, for some unforeseen emergency. As for the documents, I would sooner have burned them, in spite of their importance and of the memories attached to them, than hand them to that German who might have used them for Heaven knew what dangerous purpose.

"What did he say when you gave him my reply?" I asked my husband after the man had called.

"He said he could afford to wait . . . but he would gain his ends, 'in time.' "

A few weeks later, having finished some work I had been doing on a historical costume which my husband needed for a painting, representing a sixteenth-century nobleman reading by a window—the picture was intended for the salon—I went up to the studio. An old Italian model, a man called Giganti, was there.

"Monsieur went out for a while, and told me to wait for him, Madame. . . . He seemed rather upset. . . ."

"What about?"

"Oh! He said he had lost a 'political paper.' . . ."

It then occurred to me that during the past few days my husband had been somewhat strange and embarrassed in his manner. We had a conversation about the "political paper," and he finally admitted that he "had mislaid a letter of President Faure. . . ."

"I can guess what has happened," I said. "That man came again and demanded from you a proof that the documents were still in our possession. You had to show them to him, and one dropped . . . which the man promptly seized, no doubt, and as the letters are numbered you discovered when examining them that one had disappeared. Those papers are not safe in your studio. Give them back to me."

He readily consented, and I hid it in the "secret" drawer of

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my writing-table, after having carefully looked through the documents and found that none was missing, except the "mislaid" letter, which was, however, written in a cypher known only to the President and myself.

During the years that followed, the mysterious foreigner continued to call, and, as the reader will learn, did so until a few weeks before the murder of my husband and my mother in 1908. I am inclined to believe that the necklace was a crown jewel which, by a series of strange events, came into the possession of President Faure. That the "German" should have spent so much time in exacting the pearls seems strange, but it has occurred to me that the man was playing a double game, blackmailing not only us—I doubt if M. Steinheil was ever paid for the pearls—but also the personage who was so anxious to recover them. By giving them up a few at a time, he naturally kept that personage longer in his power.

As for the way in which the necklace came into the President's possession, I take it that some foreign . . . Prince, with whom perhaps, for political reasons, he ought not to have been on intimate terms, had very probably lost heavily to him at a secret gambling party. Félix Faure was paid with the necklace instead of in cash, owing to the temporary financial embarrassment of his illustrious friend. The latter then, to his horror, found out the origin of the necklace and that it had been stolen—for it seemed to me that there had probably been a robbery. If the truth had leaked out, both the President and his friend would have been involved in a scandal of such far-reaching political consequences that perhaps a war might have resulted. In their consternation, they agreed to deny all knowledge of the necklace, hence the agitation of the President, who had already given me the pearls and who two days later begged me to hide them and on no account to wear them.

The "foreigner" was probably a professional blackmailer, and when he found that nothing more was to be done with the pearls and that his livelihood from that source was gone, sought to turn to his advantage the knowledge which he had

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gained from my husband (always too ready to give his confidence to any one who posed as his friend) of Félix Faure's documents.

I earnestly hope that some day the mystery will be solved. My theory may then be found wanting in certain particulars, but I believe that, on the whole, it will seem, to the reader, the most plausible.

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CHAPTER X

1899–1908

M. Émile Loubet, President of the Senate, followed Félix Faure as President of the Republic on February 18th, 1899. As every one knows, stones were showered upon the new President as he passed on his way from Versailles, where the "Congress" had elected him, to the station where he entrained for Paris. He was called "Panama the First"—though he had had nothing to do with the Panama frauds—insulted and besmirched as few men have been. I was only a few yards from M. Loubet at the Auteuil Steeplechase Meeting (June), when young Baron Christiani smashed the top hat of the President and almost hit with his stick the wife of the Italian Ambassador, Countess Tornielli. But M. Loubet never flinched, and he weathered the storm till it abated. Some have called this cowardice; I would rather call it heroism—of a kind.

Besides the highly important and final developments in the Dreyfus affair—which have been summed up in another chapter—and its truly amazing epilogue, that is, the complete and rapid way in which France recovered from the terrible crisis and emerged serene and vigorous, there happened little worth referring to during the year 1899. There were, however, a few amazing interludes. The poet Déroulède seized the bridle of the horse of General Roget, a staunch Anti-Dreyfusard, on the day of President Faure's funeral, and ordered him to march with his troops on to the Elysée—another *coup* that failed. Déroulède was arrested, but the Court of Assize acquitted him on May 31st. There were

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many comical conspiracies and many comical trials of conspirators; there were constant riots in Paris and elsewhere, all more noisy than alarming; there were thousands of Socialists with red button-holes in search of Royalists with white button-holes . . . and they never met. And there was the farce of the "Fort" Chabrol (a house in the Rue Chabrol, where the Anti-Semitic League had offices), which garrisoned by Jules Guérin, the secretary of the League, and a few friends, held five thousand soldiers at bay for nearly two months. Guérin and other heroes of the fort, and also Déroulède, were tried by the Senate transformed into "High Court," and were sentenced to ten years' banishment. . . .

Afterwards things gradually quieted down. Dupuy had fallen and Waldeck-Rousseau had succeeded him as Premier. He was an able barrister and authoritive statesman who had held office in the strenuous days of Gambetta and Jules Ferry.

In May 1900, however, there was one more amusing incident. At the Paris Municipal Elections a huge majority of Nationalists and "Anti-Semites" were returned. . . . But then Paris was ever "in the opposition" and Parisians have ever been *frondeurs*.

The 1900 Exhibition brilliantly terminated the century. La Belle France, who was thoroughly tired of riots, "leagues," and agitations, had once more become quite peaceful and "respectable," as befitted a lady who was about to receive a number of sovereigns (including the Czar and his Empress, who came in 1901).

France is logical, although fond of Paradox—and practical—although, hasty, violent, quixotic, and ever in search of the truth. . . . And France respects Authority, although she tries to call herself socialistic, whereas she is merely democratic.

King Edward VII. came to France at the beginning of May 1903, that is, not quite a year after the end of the Boer War, and he was greeted in such a way that he might have been entitled to say: "I am the most popular man in France."

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This was partly due to his almost abnormal gift of sympathy and partly to the well-known French readiness to swing round to a new opinion. Boer victories had been hailed with shouts of mad exultation, and English successes with groans of agony and fury, but the French became pro-English the instant King Edward landed in France. There was a dinner at the British Embassy, and President Loubet and several celebrities, including my friend Bonnat, attended. The Entente Cordiale was already talked of.

King Edward came to France exactly two years later, in May 1905, and for the first time there were cries in Paris of "Vive l'Angleterre" and "Vive le Roi." To shout "Long live the King" is just the sort of thing that Republicans of France love to do!

In March 1906 King Edward came once more to France, incognito this time, and travelling as the Duke of Lancaster. Fallières had then succeeded Loubet as President of the Republic. That year Paris received visits from a number of Members of Parliament, from members of the London County Council, and from the Lord Mayor, whose gilded coach and portly coachman took the Parisians by storm. . . . And the Entente Cordiale gradually increased in vitality and sincerity until it became an important factor in the equilibrium of Europe.

During those years the "separation" of Church and State was carried out and afterwards Anti-Clericalism subsided. A mention must also be made of the "Conféderation Générale du Travail"—a kind of federation of trade unions—born in January 1903. This C. G. T., a child of Socialism, very soon broke from the parent, cultivated strikes, and showed from the first that its aim is social revolution, though it is not clear what the C. G. T. dictators would do after the social revolution had taken place. Syndicalism, so far, can hardly be called "popular."

In January 1906 M. Fallières—simple, solid, and safe—succeeded Loubet as President of the Republic, and the same year Clémenceau, unscrupulous but extremely able and so intensely picturesque, became Prime Minister. Whatever may

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be thought of him as a statesman, he, at any rate, did one great thing. He gave France confidence in herself at a critical moment. That was in November 1908. In 1905 Delcassé had had to go because the German Emperor wished it. That was after the "Imperial" landing in Morocco. In November 1908 Clémenceau refused to obey Germany, who had asked for an apology in regard to the Casablanca incident. Ever since that France has seemed to be once more sure of her strength, and, without embarking upon any very great adventure, has shown much firmness and purpose in her foreign policy.

As soon as I was well enough after my illness and shock I threw open the doors of my salon.

I went through a difficult time. The great majority of my acquaintances had read what the papers said, and knowing that my husband and I frequently went to the Elysée, they had no difficulty in guessing who was meant by "Madame S.," or "the wife of the well-known painter." . . . Not one of them, of course, was so tactless as to refer to the matter . . . but my friends had friends who insisted upon being introduced to me. And so to my receptions there came scores of amiable persons of both sexes, who gazed at me, looked me up and down, and studied me as if I were an object of great curiosity. I had the courage to take no notice whatever of this, and I faced it unflinchingly, although the ordeal was painful; for I knew well enough that these good people had not come with any goodwill towards me in their hearts, but rather to see one whom they looked upon as the latest "fatal woman," as a Delilah or Judith up-to-date. I smiled on them all, as I had in the past, and sang and played to them in the old way.

The ordeal was worse when I went to other houses. When I entered a crowded drawing-room all eyes were turned on me and a sudden hush fell, wrapping me as in my cloak. Then, as host and hostess greeted me, a strange murmur arose and went up and down the room in little gusts, that broke now from this brilliant group of men and women and now from that, and I felt that all this whispering was about me. There

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were many healthy-minded women and honest men who took my part and defended me, but I soon realised that it was beyond them to convince my enemies, and still less the sceptics and the cynics. . . . In Paris scepticism and cynicism are a fashionable pose, under which people too often hide the noble principles and generous thoughts which would more truly express their nature and true characters. I, therefore, determined to conquer one by one, not only my enemies, but also those in whose eyes I could read a poor opinion of me. It was an ardent, almost a titanic task, but in time I succeeded. And many of those who had spoken lightly of me, or had thought me a "fatal" person, became my most devoted friends . . . It was a trying time, but I lived through it and won in the end—thanks, of course, to the fact that not a word of those calumnies was true, and also to my mother's devotion and to my little Marthe's tender love. My mother looked after me in that pretty way that children often have; and, on the other hand, my little daughter, now a tiny mite of eight, was almost maternal in her solicitude for me.

Why was I so anxious to return to my old position among the men and women of Paris? . . . Because my reputation was at stake. Whether I liked it or not, whether the task was feasible or almost impossible, I had to battle and conquer. And I did conquer. Calumny, the most elusive and dangerous enemy that woman may have to face, was routed . . . and some six months after the death of President Faure my receptions were more largely attended than ever. I had tested all those who claimed to be my friends, and found they were sincere. In official circles my influence had not waned, and I was able to render service to many as in the past.

My mother had settled down for good in her pretty *châlet* at Beaucourt, but she frequently came to Paris and stayed either at the house of my younger sister, or with me in the Impasse Ronsin.

My relations with my husband were what they had been for years. We were good comrades, and I did my utmost to make his life a pleasant and comfortable one. I spent much of my time in the studio. He felt much older than his fifty

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years and needed much coaxing and encouraging to work. His technique as a painter had marvellously improved, but more and more he lacked imagination, and time after time I suggested to him subjects for his pictures, and advised him in matters of "composition" and "grouping," of backgrounds and atmosphere. Our life, after all, was not abnormal. There are thousands of married couples in Paris who live apart, and yet remain the best of partners and friends. . . .

From 1899 to 1908 my husband painted many portraits—delicate miniatures in oils which were not only works of art, but subtle, psychological studies; although I believe he never realised this himself. Several persons came from Germany to visit the studios and buy pictures, and my husband told me they had been sent by the mysterious foreigner.

But they always came when I was not at home. The pictures disappeared from the studio, however, and I know that my husband had received payment for them. He obviously did not care to talk about these clients, and I was not in the least anxious to find out details about them. I had for many months spared no effort in attempting to solve the mystery of the pearl necklace, and of the "German," but my efforts had been in vain.

In 1906 I hired a villa at Bellevue, a delightful wooded village overlooking the Seine, near Paris. It was M. Ch., my great friend, who had discovered this charming summer residence nestling under the heavy foliage of beautiful old trees. . . .

We are now nearing the tragic time of my life, but before I go into that long story of horror and agony—the murder of my husband and my mother, my struggles to find the murderers, the terrifying scenes at the Impasse Ronsin, my arrest, my life in prison, and my trial—I should like to recall a pretty incident which occurred at Bellevue. . . . There is nothing wonderful or unusually amusing about it, but perhaps the reader will welcome it as a sustaining draught of pure and fragrant air, before being plunged into the dark abyss of grief and terror where I suffered and struggled for so long.

"Vert-Logis" (green cottage), my Bellevue villa, stood at a

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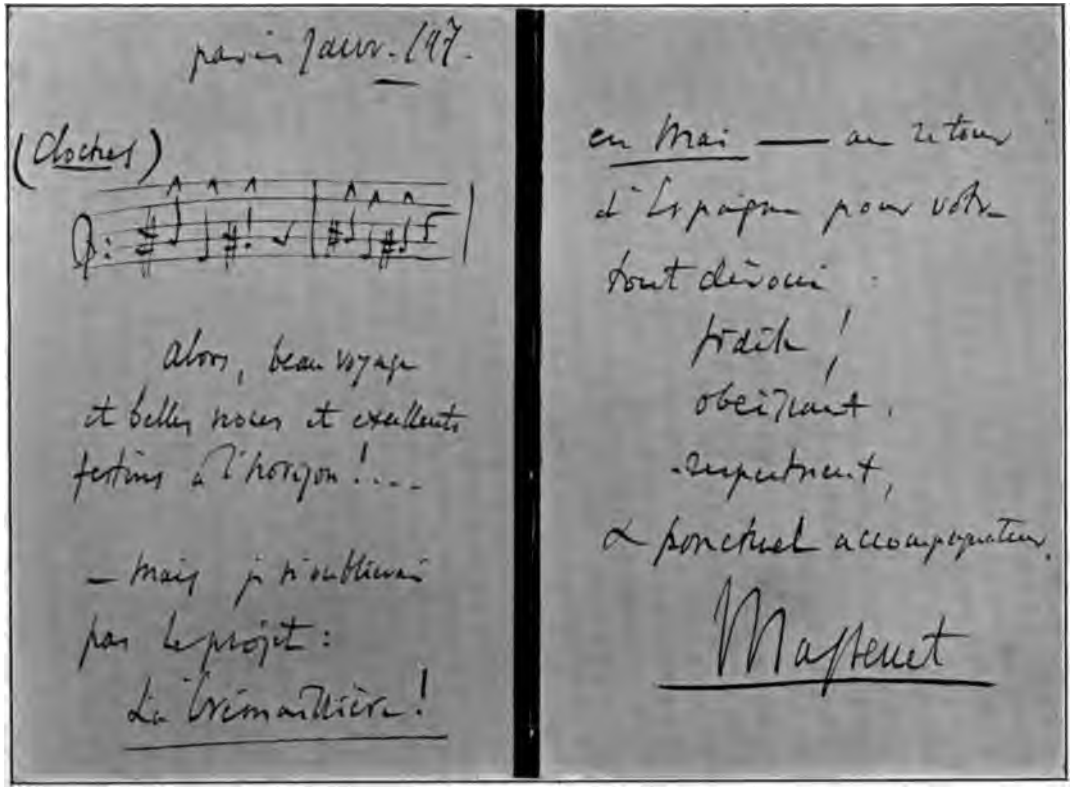

A LETTER SENT ME BY MASSENET IN 1907, AND SIGNED

"... Your Devoted, Faithful, Obedient, Respectful and Punctual Accompanist"

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short distance from the Meudon Observatory, the director of which was M. Janssen, the famous astronomer. The observatory was surrounded by a vast and splendid park, everywhere enclosed off. Through the bars of one of the gates Marthe and I saw, one fine summer's day, a large field that was one mass of marguerites. Marthe was longing to gather great bunches of them. We hailed a keeper, who was passing by, and asked him whether he would pick some of the flowers for us and pass them through the gate. . . . Or perhaps he would open the gate to us for a few minutes?

"Oh! Madame, all that is strictly forbidden," said the man.

"What a pity!"

I must have looked very disappointed, for hesitatingly he said: "Well, perhaps you might come in the morning, say at eight, before there are people about. I'll open the gate and you can gather a few flowers."

The next day Marthe and I returned from the observatory garden with so many flowers that we could hardly carry them.

The old keeper scratched his head, and remarked: "I thought you only wanted a few! You must be really fond of flowers, Madame."

Soon afterwards I met M. Janssen. We had many friends in common, and the savant gave orders that the gates of the park should always be opened to me and allowed me to gather as many of the flowers as I pleased. Then, with a typical courtesy, the aged astronomer—he was then over eighty years old—said to me: "Madame, since you love flowers so well, would you care to see the flowers of heaven?"

I accepted, of course, and one clear night I experienced the unique joy of watching a star through a powerful telescope. With a feeling of rapture and enchantment that was wholly new to me, I saw the star scintillate, change colour, and shine forth in all the exquisite hues of the rainbow. . . . And thoughts of the Infinite whirled through my dazzled brain . . . I would go to clutch that star, I longed to grasp it; I wanted to know, to understand, the meaning of space and matter, of Eternity and the Infinite—and of Life. . . . And on my way

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home, as I looked up towards the star-studded sky, I was thrilled as I had never been before, and forgetting what the old savant had told me about the endless and intricate calculations which are the chief occupations of the star-gazer ("a living algebraical machine") I felt that the astronomer, who constantly watches mysterious and unconceivably distant worlds in the depths of space, is devoting his life to the grandest, the most sublime and lofty science of all. And I thought of my father, who so often, at Beaucourt, had talked to me about the stars, the moon-world, the comets, the milky way. . . . And I recalled those words of Kant, which he more than once quoted to me: "There are two things which ever fill me with new and growing admiration: the moral law within me, and the starry heavens above me."

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CHAPTER XI

EVENTS THAT PRECEDED THE CRIME

At the beginning of the year 1908, my little Marthe became engaged to young Pierre Buisson, son of an intimate friend of mine. Shortly afterwards she renounced the Protestant faith and joined the Catholic Church. This suited her somewhat mystical nature. She loved the immensity of cathedrals, the light through stained-glass windows, the beautiful services, the incense and the little bells, the plain-chant and the vestments of the priests. She loved to be guided; she shirked responsibilities; she liked to be able to enter "her" church at any time of the day and any day. She thought it was "restful" to be a Catholic. Perhaps religion to her was more a matter of sensations and feelings than of the mind; perhaps more a question of art, poesy and comforting illusion than of thought. Dogma was nothing to her; atmosphere a great deal. . . . She thought she could pray better in the semi-darkness and immensity of an ancient cathedral than within the plain white walls of a small Protestant temple. She prayed for the man she loved, and he was a Catholic. . . .

I neither opposed nor encouraged this change of religion. Marthe was seventeen, extremely "wise" for her age and never acted rashly. I did not question whether she was right or wrong; I merely asked her carefully to examine her heart and search her conscience, and when later she told me: "Mother, I feel I shall be happier if I become a Catholic," I raised no further objection.

In March 1908—about two months before the tragedy,

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I all but fainted one afternoon in the "Metropolitan" (the Paris Underground). I had not quite recovered from a dangerous illness, and this had been my first outing. I must have looked very pale and ill, for several persons rushed to my assistance. A gentleman kindly helped me up the staircase leading to the street and offered to accompany me as far as my house, which was only a short distance away. I gladly accepted. The fresh air did me much good. As we neared the Impasse Ronsin he asked: "Do you happen to know M. Steinheil the painter? He lives somewhere near here."

"I am Mme. Steinheil," I replied.

The gentleman asked permission to call and inquire after my health. He handed me his card and I read "Comte de Balincourt."

* * * * *

Before relating all I have to say about M. de Balincourt, I wish to state that I have no intention whatever of accusing him of any complicity.

I shall merely describe the part he played in the lives of my husband and myself a few weeks before the crime, and why my suspicions against him were aroused then; and again when, in prison, I found in the *Dossier* of my case a number of documents concerning M. de Balincourt's life, I did not speak of my suspicions except to my counsel and two or three persons who visited me when I was a prisoner at Saint-Lazare.

Rémy Couillard—my man-servant—and Alexandre Wolff—the son of my cook, I did accuse of the murder in circumstances and for reasons which I will fully explain in due time. The Law found Couillard and Wolff absolutely innocent and I bowed—and bow—to the Law.

But since I have had, at a time, the gravest suspicions against them both and against M. de Balincourt, I must—and will—say why with utmost sincerity, although let it be thoroughly understood that I have long ceased to accuse them of having had any part whatsoever, directly or indirectly, in the mystery of the Impasse Ronsin.

I made grave errors and paid dearly for them. But as in these "Memoirs" I take the reader into my confidence and

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disclose my life and my thoughts, it is only right that I should, without hesitation though without any *arrière-pensée*, explain the reasons which led me to believe, for a short time, my man-servant, the son of my cook, and M. de Balincourt to have some part in the tragedy of May 30th–31st, 1908.

The day after our first encounter M. de Balincourt called. After a few polite inquiries he asked to see M. Steinheil. In the studio he examined the pictures, made himself very pleasant, congratulated my husband on his talent, and asked him whether he would paint his portrait in hunting-costume.

M. de Balincourt, hearing that my husband intended shortly to hold an important exhibition of his pictures, said he had had some experience in organising shows of that kind.

"My paintings will probably be exhibited at the 'Georges Petit Gallery,' " said M. Steinheil.

"It will be expensive," M. de Balincourt suggested. "Why not have the exhibition here, in this vast studio. When I was organising an exhibition some time ago I made some notes, which I have kept, about art-collectors and lists of addresses of people likely to buy paintings. I could help you a great deal. We could fit up the studio specially for that exhibition. I am sure it would be a great success."

He came three days later, and again offered to assist us: "I shall require no payment . . ." he added, "but perhaps M. Steinheil will charge me less for my portrait."

Shortly afterwards the Count came to sit. He proved full of life and energy—"the very man to push the sale of my pictures when the show takes place," said my husband. At first M. de Balincourt came only to sit for his portrait, but soon he arrived in time for lunch, and remained until after tea-time. I began to be a trifle suspicious, but my husband, who talked a great deal with him, warmly took his part.

One day I overheard a few words of conversation between them, in which, to my intense surprise, the word "documents" and the name "Félix Faure" occurred several times.

I was somewhat alarmed, for a month or so before, the mysterious and dreaded "German" had once more appeared

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on the scene, and afterwards my husband had told me that he again demanded the ten large pearls and also the famous papers and memoirs. I refused to part with them and said: "Tell the man that I have burnt them."

This strange conversation between my husband and M. de Balincourt, who had only known us a few days, puzzled and irritated me a great deal, and after the Count's departure I asked Adolphe for an explanation. He merely replied that I was mistaken. . . .

M. de Balincourt came more and more frequently, and ingratiated himself with the Buisson family, who were almost constantly with us. He was, above all, on good terms with my husband. I need hardly say that he was extremely attentive to me, and as I was most anxious to find out what was in his mind, and of what it was that he talked with my husband, I pretended to be pleased with his praise and flattery.

M. de Balincourt called on me one evening at Bellevue. Before his arrival I had had a brief conversation with Mariette Wolff, my old cook, who had been in my service, first as an occasional help, and afterwards as cook, for many years.

I had noticed that, in Paris, the Count often went to the kitchen. . . . Mariette seemed to know a great deal about him, and I asked her how it was.

"Well, Madame," she said, "M. de Balincourt often comes into the kitchen to have his boots cleaned, and also the hunting knife he wears for the portrait which Monsieur is painting. He is very chatty and communicative. I hear that he divorced his wife two years ago, and that he takes a great interest in racing. You know my son, Alexandre, often goes to race meetings. The Count and Alexandre know one another. . . ."

M. de Balincourt arrived and I encouraged him to tell me all about himself. He described his adventurous life to me, his worries, the various "crises" he had gone through, his family affairs. He told me that he had taken an active part in revictualling the famous Fort Chabrol in 1899, and that he often gambled and lost. . . .

He drank wine freely, and talked and talked. . . .

"If you are so often in financial difficulties," I asked, "how

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are you able to give my husband a commission for a portrait?"

"Oh! I always manage to get out of trouble. Nothing worries me . . . I have tried my hand at many games, including little political side-games. . . ."

Now was the moment to find out what his conversation with my husband had been about. M. de Balincourt told me that M. Steinheil had talked to him about Félix Faure and the talisman. "He even showed me a very interesting letter written by the late President, on the margin of which there were several notes in your handwriting. . . ."

"You lie," I cried boldly, for I wanted to force him to tell me more. . . .

For a moment M. de Balincourt was taken aback, but he soon pulled himself together, and began to give me such details that it was impossible to doubt his word. "Your husband," he concluded, "tells me everything. . . . For instance, he told me only yesterday that he does not like to leave the house because he fears burglars; he has received many letters, the contents of which he keeps secret. . . . He also said the house had been broken into on one occasion. . . ." (That was quite correct.)

It became clearer and clearer that my husband was concealing something from me. I had a further proof of this several months after the tragedy, when Couillard confessed to the examining magistrate that his master had kept up a secret correspondence, and that he, Couillard, had received orders from M. Steinheil, even on May 30th (that is a few hours before the murders were committed) to hide any letter that might come for him under the cloth on the hall-table, and that, above all, Madame must not know anything about them. Two mysterious messages did come by express, and Couillard concealed them as he had been told. These two letters were never traced. Who knows but that if they had been found they might have given some useful clue as to the authors of the murders?

After my conversation with M. de Balincourt I remained at Bellevue for a few days. A mystery yet unsolved is merely

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irritating, but a mystery which you feel others are determined to prevent you from solving—although you know you must—has a disastrous effect upon the spirit. It is possible to face open danger without flinching, but the bravest of hearts quails before an indefinite peril lurking in the dark and likely to reveal itself you cannot tell when. Imagination inevitably runs amuck and pictures the worst of horrors with a distracting facility.

I spent miserable days at Bellevue, wondering what to do. Sometimes I thought that my anxieties were childish and unfounded, but at other moments, danger seemed as near and real that I half believed that I should touch it if I put out my hand. It was there before me, though I could not see it and could not give a name to it. I thought of President Faure's necklace, of the documents, of the mysterious "German," of my husband's reticence and also of his sudden and inconceivable bursts of confidence in total strangers. . . . He was nearly sixty now, and on several occasions I had heard him speak to certain of his models as he would have to old and intimate friends. He was both imprudent and nervous, easy-going and suspicious. . . . What was there at the bottom of this relation with that German? Why were those secret meetings with my husband so carefully arranged that not once had I been able to come face to face with him! Why was not one single letter of his shown to me? And why would my husband never give me any details about his transactions and his conversations with the man?

And now M. de Balincourt had gained M. Steinheil's confidence. He had gained mine, too, but not for long, for, after I had seen him two or three times, I read through him!

I had so little to go by that in spite of every effort to concentrate my whole mind on it I could not solve the problem, and at last gave up all hope of doing so. I was in despair. Years ago I had dismissed the whole matter from my thoughts, but now the mystery had returned with renewed perils. It held me in its tentacles, and I felt that not only was I threatened by it, but also my mother, my husband and my only child, whose lives were so intimately bound up in mine.

Thank Heaven, my little Marthe was with me, and we took

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long walks with her *fiancé* and his parents in the Meudon Park. And in the evening we played and sang together. . . .

One morning my husband, whom I had asked to join me at Bellevue, telephoned from Paris, where he had remained to put the finishing touches to a number of paintings destined for the proposed exhibition of his works. He informed me that a very wealthy foreigner had called to order a small portrait of President Fallières, which he wanted for a magnificent album containing drawings by great painters and also a few bars of music by celebrated composers. . . . He knew a great number of prominent Germans who were coming to Paris for the Horse Show, and whom he would bring to the studio. . . .

"I cannot come to Bellevue," my husband concluded, "for I must do this portrait at once. The foreign gentleman says he is to be received at the Elysée very soon, and he wants to ask the President to sign his name at the foot of my picture. . . . I should, of course, paint the portrait from a photograph which the gentleman has brought. . . ."

To me all this sounded suspicious, and I told my husband so. "I don't like the idea of President Fallières' autograph under your drawing. . . . Why don't you tell this wealthy collector to apply to our friend Bonnat?"

The telephone worked indifferently that day, and I could not quite catch the meaning of my husband's reply, so I said: "Please refuse to draw that portrait. At any rate, let the matter stand over for a day or two. Find some pretext and come to see me here."

He came. . . . The Buisson family were present when he explained to me that the foreigner was quite reliable and that he had promised to bring to the studio two German Princes. . . .

I asked him whether the wealthy foreigner was a German, and he replied in the affirmative. Then, reading a question in my eyes, he said hastily: "No, no . . . he is not the same man as the German you are thinking of!"

My husband spoke so well of the stranger that I felt almost ashamed of being so suspicious.

He returned to Paris and I remained with my daughter and the Buissons at Bellevue; but, try as I might, I could not keep

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the mysterious German out of my thoughts, and, becoming anxious about the safety of the Félix Faure documents, I returned to Paris twenty-four hours after my husband had left Bellevue.

At lunch my husband said: "I really must finish that portrait to-day, for this evening a messenger from the 'Grand Hotel' will come to fetch it. So please see that no one disturbs me this afternoon. The gentleman who ordered the Fallières portrait is dining to-night with the German Princes I told you about, and with several other personages, and he wishes to show the picture to them all."

He then asked me several times whether I would go out or remain at home, and it was quite clear that, for some reason which I could not guess, he was most anxious that I should not be in that afternoon. I had a presentiment that it would be better for me to remain at home, and that by doing so I might, perhaps, find out something about this strange commission.

Besides, my dressmaker was there, and I was expecting a few friends. My time was, therefore, fully occupied, and I did not go up to my husband's studio.

In the evening, at about seven-thirty, I told Rémy Couillard to have dinner served. He said: ". . . Monsieur is not ready. . . . He is upstairs with the gentleman who brought a large photograph of the President. (Couillard had himself opened the parcel for his master.) The gentleman called this afternoon, and he is still in the studio."

"When did he come?"

"At tea-time, Madame."

I went up to the dressmaker, who was still at work.

"Oh! Monsieur Steinheil was looking for you a little time ago, to show you the portrait of M. Fallières. I saw it—it is very nice . . ."

It was clear that my husband had come down to find where I was, so that he might let the "foreigner" out of the house without my seeing him.

I was about to go up the stairs leading to the studio when I heard steps coming down in the dark. I was at the door of the sewing-room in the corridor on the first floor. To my

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intense surprise I saw a man lift the tapestry shutting off the corridor from the landing. The man walked straight on, my husband following him. When he saw me, the man exclaimed in French, but with a pronounced German accent: "Oh! excuse me, Mademoiselle."

"No, no," said my husband, "that is not my daughter, but my wife."

"You are not on the ground floor, Sir," I said coldly, "but on the first floor where the private apartments are."

(It had struck me that he seemed to know his way to the corridor, and perhaps to the boudoir where the documents were kept. The tapestry hid the entrance to the passage so well that it could not possibly occur to any one not familiar with the topography of the house to raise the heavy drapery —in the thought that it led to the hall—for it looked for all the world as if it were hung against the wall of the landing.)

"Ach!" said the German, apologetically . . . "I have made a mistake. As a matter of fact, I passed through here this morning when M. Steinheil wanted to show me some old bibelots and prints in a small sitting-room you have up here . . . I came here quite accidentally, and we were going down, your husband and I. . . ."

He stammered and looked most embarrassed. "It is really most extraordinary," I said to him in German, "that you should have found your way in here, especially in the dark. There is a light in the hall, whilst there is none in the staircase at present." Then, as I wished to see this person in a full light, for the passage where we stood was only faintly lit by the light coming from the sewing-room, I added: "If you are fond of old prints, I can show you some downstairs."

I ran and told Couillard to turn the lights on in the drawing-room.

When I was, at last, able to see the man clearly, I was amazed and disgusted. The "wealthy foreigner" was a small man of about fifty with a long Jewish nose, with scanty hair and moustache that were dyed black, small beady eyes, sly and shifty, and a sallow complexion. His dress-suit was shabby and even greasy. The shirtfront was not clean and was

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adorned with two large paste-diamond studs. The man's ill-shaped hands wanted washing and were certainly not the hands of a gentleman. His whole figure inspired me with repulsion, even with fear.

"It appears," I told him, "that to-night you are attending an important dinner with some princes to whom you wish to show the portrait of Fallières which my husband made for you. . . . Could I see that portrait?"

The Jew brought out an album of medium size, from which he took a portrait which my husband had drawn of Fallières. As he replaced it in the album I could see that there were other drawings at which he evidently did not want me to look. The haste with which he shut up the album aroused my suspicions once more.

"Still," I remarked, "I cannot understand why you asked M. Steinheil for a portrait of the President. M. Steinheil seldom paints portraits. Like Meissonier, his master, his speciality is miniatures in oils, representing historic scenes, and *genre* pictures. You should have gone to M. Bonnat, who is the official painter of Presidents."

The man's looks grew almost threatening, and something of a snarl came into his voice: "You forget, Madame, that your husband has painted President Faure!"

"Quite so, but the picture you are referring to could hardly be called a portrait. The right thing to ask M. Steinheil for your album of celebrities would have been a sketch for a stained-glass window, a study of some mediæval personage or a *seigneur* of the Renaissance period. . . ."

The German collected himself. "Perhaps you are right, Madame. . . . At any rate, I am very thankful to M. Steinheil, and I will try to repay him for this portrait by bringing here some rich clients."

"But," I exclaimed, "I suppose you have paid for the portrait of M. Fallières?"

A quick questioning glance passed between my husband and the Jew. "It is quite all right," said the former. . . . "I promised this gentleman to do the drawing free of charge, for he will sell a number of my paintings to his friends, and will

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help us with the forthcoming exhibition of my works. He has taken a whole pack of invitation cards and will send them to the right kind of people."

On the piano stood the box with the comb which President Faure had given me. Wishing to find out whether this strange man knew it, I said: "Since you are fond of beautiful things, what do you think of this?"

The man took the comb and said: "Yes, this is one of the finest works of art Lalique has ever turned out. . . . You sometimes wore this comb in years gone by, in the days when Félix Faure was President!"

The tone in which the last words were spoken told me more than the words themselves. I left the drawing-room followed by the Jew, who hastily left the house.

"That man," I said to my husband when we were alone, "is the mysterious German of whom you have often spoken to me, the man you have met every few months for the past nine years, the man who first came here shortly after the death of President Faure, the man who 'bought' the pearls and wanted the documents! . . ."

My husband at first tried to deny, but soon admitted the truth of what I said. However, he kept absolutely silent when I entreated him to give me some details about the man, to tell me the truth at last, to explain the secret of this Fallières portrait and of this "wealthy foreigner," who did not pay for what he ordered, who knew his way about our house even in the dark, and who dined with princes in a shabby shotted coat!

And here, let the reader allow me to state, that I fully realised—and still realise—that had I not consented to keep the necklace for Félix Faure's sake, all these troubles would probably never have occurred. But what woman would have acted otherwise than I did, after the words the President had spoken? And on the other hand is it not evident that, had my husband fully taken me into his confidence as regards that enigmatical personage whom he called "the German Jew" (his nationality may have been anything, but he was undoubtedly a Jew, and spoke German most fluently), matters might have taken another course, and many terrible anxieties have been spared us?

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That very night, fearing for the safety of the documents, I took them from the writing-table in my boudoir, and made, with a newspaper and large envelopes, a dummy parcel of papers, as like the genuine one as possible. On the top I wrote as I had written on the real parcel, my name and these words: "Private papers. To be burnt after my death." The dummy was fastened and sealed in exactly the same way and, as in the model, one could see here and there, when the wrapper was torn, corners of large envelopes, duplicates of those in which I had enclosed Félix Faure's papers and the Memoirs which we had partly written in collaboration. The dummy I put in the drawer where the genuine documents had been, and these latter I hid in a place of safety the next day.

The reader may wonder why I was so anxious to keep these papers. I can only say that they reminded me of a most interesting portion of my life, that they contained most enlightening information on many events of national and international importance. . . . And perhaps there was in me that vague, well-nigh unconscious and yet unconquerable sentiment which makes you loth to part with anything that you have kept for a long time, for if you live long enough with things, they become, as it were, part and parcel of your existence.

My husband's exhibition was drawing near the date of opening. As the days passed by we saw less and less of M. de Balincourt, although he had so faithfully promised to come and help in the organisation. Several telegrams sent to him by my husband remained unanswered. It then occurred to me to invite him to dinner, together with the Buissons and Count and Countess d'Arlon. We received a note from M. de Balincourt explaining that he had been ill, and away on a journey, but that he accepted the invitation. He arrived at 8.30—an hour late. "You take many liberties with old French politeness," I said to him. "Neither my guests nor I have been used to such treatment. How is it that the three messages my husband sent you to the three different addresses you gave him have all remained unanswered? . . ."

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"There must be some mistake . . ."

"I agree with you. No, listen, M. de Balincourt. Last Sunday some friends came to take me with them for a motor drive and lunch in the country. They were M. V.—the motor manufacturer—and his wife, whom you met here once. I was told that you called on the V.s afterwards. They wrote to you, but the letter was returned with the mention 'name unknown at this address.' Your life does not concern us, but you might at least give us your proper address! Hearing this from the V.s, I suggested that we should drive to the various addresses you had given my husband. We had the greatest difficulty in discovering the first one. We went to Boulogne (near Paris) and were directed to a narrow, evil-smelling, cut-throat place where rag- and bone-pickers lived. I thought we had made a mistake, and we were about to turn back when M. V. knocked at the worm-eaten door of the house. An evil-looking man appeared, and answered our inquiries: 'M. de Balincourt? . . . I don't know him, but I believe he sometimes has letters addressed here, and a friend of his, a M. Delpit, has asked us to send his letters on to an address which I will give you, if you like.'

"M. and Mme. V., who were as nonplussed as I was myself, which is saying a great deal, proposed that we should drive to that address. There, our suspicions became greater than ever, for we found ourselves in a worse place than the first. An old woman said: 'M. de Balincourt? He lives yonder, in that house.' We went there and made fresh inquiries. At last a man in tatters shouts from a window: 'He has just left' . . . I need hardly tell you that we all had the impression that you were there."

M. de Balincourt turned very pale and stammered: "That was not my address . . . a friend of mine, a very poor artist, lives there . . . He forwards my letters to me."

After dinner he apologised profusely, gave me all kinds of possible explanations, talked to my husband before me about the "exhibition," and later addressed a great number of invitation cards . . . to show his goodwill.

A week elapsed, and M. de Balincourt did not appear. I

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organised everything myself. I decided to hold the exhibition in the vast "winter garden."

On the opening day, April 7th, 1908, some five hundred persons called, including several Ministers and scores of prominent officials. During the afternoon M. de Balincourt arrived. He came every day while the exhibition lasted, and had long chats with M. Steinheil, through whom, I noticed, he contrived to get introduced to as many important persons as possible. He had a small note-book, in which he jotted down the pictures that were sold and the prices. Several times I saw suspicious-looking characters enter the house. They had invitation cards. Once or twice, in order to test whether my suspicions were well founded or not, I walked straight up to these strange intruders and said severely: "I am sorry; the room is full. We cannot admit any more people." And they at once withdrew without a word.

On the last day of the show I spoke my mind to M. de Balincourt. And I never saw him again, except at my trial, where he gave evidence.

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CHAPTER XII

MAY 1908

In April I made the acquaintance of M. Bdl. . . . through a common friend, the Director of the Paris Mont de Piété. Mr. Bdl. was a widower with several children, and although his residence was in the Ardennes, he frequently came to Paris. We met at a time when I was greatly depressed, and also vaguely alarmed. I felt myself surrounded by invisible dangers, and life had become almost unbearable. M. Bdl. was a strong, straightforward, very intelligent and very refined man. He had a great regard for me, and we became intimate friends. Afterwards, however, he showed himself to be so violent and domineering that our acquaintance came very soon to an end, although we parted in the best of terms, and occasionally wrote to each other. I should not even have mentioned this episode of my life, if it were not that M. Bdl. played a relatively important part in that long and complex drama called the "Steinheil Affair," on account of certain declarations which I am supposed to have made on the so-called "night of the confession" (November 26th, 1908), a "confession" which was greatly responsible for my arrest.

On May 18th, I went to Bellevue, to settle down there, as I did every spring. My mother, who was at Beaucourt, wrote saying that she would come to Paris. I no longer have that letter, but the letter which I sent to my mother in reply was found, and is here reproduced. Its importance will not escape the reader, after I state that I was accused of having enticed my mother to my house in Paris in order to murder her together with my husband! As for the reason which it was supposed

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had led me to murder my mother it was as follows: If I killed my husband only, I might be suspected of the crime, for I was not on very good terms with him, and probably I wished to be free to marry some wealthy and more congenial man. But, if I also killed my mother, then (according to the logic with which the prosecution kindly credited me), I should not be suspected, for people would say: she might have murdered her husband, but she would never have murdered her mother. Therefore, since both were murdered, she cannot be guilty.

My letter to my mother, dated May 21st, 1908, runs as follows:

"DARLING,—I will *then* await you at the station, on Tuesday. Let me know the hour of your arrival, for I shall come straight from the country (Bellevue) to the station (in Paris). I have invited 'Ju' (my elder sister, Mme. Herr) and Madon (one of her daughters) to dinner on Tuesday night, and we shall all work hard to make things pleasant for you during your stay in Paris (meaning, of course, Paris and Bellevue), so that we may all enjoy one another's company as much as possible! Don't tire yourself too much in this terrible heat! How many things we shall have to tell each other! I have written to Dennery, to urge him to do something for Jules (my brother). I clasp you to my heart.

Your little,
MEG."

My mother changed her mind—because she did not feel well—and wired she would come on the Friday evening (May 29th) instead of on the Tuesday (May 26th).

The incidents which took place from the moment of my mother's arrival in Paris, till the fatal night—that is, from Friday evening, May 29th, till the night of May 30th–31st (1908)—must here be described at length. If they do not throw much light on the crime itself, they will, at any rate, allow the reader to judge whether any sane mind could have found in them reasons for suspecting me of being the criminal!

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FAC-SIMILE OF THE LETTER I SENT TO MY MOTHER, AT BEAUCOURT
A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE CRIME

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I quote from the *dossier* of my case, questions asked by M. André, the examining magistrate (in December 1908, and January to March 1909), and the replies I made.

. . . "My mother informed me that she would come on the Friday, May 29th, she suffered greatly from articular rheumatism in her legs. At any rate, it was agreed between us that she should put up at my house, that she should sleep there, from the very first night after her arrival."

Question. "Oh! these points are in absolute contradiction to the declaration made by Mme. Herr [my elder sister, who for many years now had been residing in Paris] on June 22nd, 1908. From that, it appears that Mme. Herr, at the end of May, received two letters from your mother; one in which your mother told her of her arrival and added that she would spend the night at her (Mme. Herr's) house, the other wherein she said that you 'claimed' your mother, and that, for that reason, she would put up at your house, on her arrival."

Answer. "I am not at all surprised. My mother may very well have written that . . . She may have wanted my sister to believe that I 'claimed' her, so that my sister might not reproach her for putting up with me, thus giving me the preference . . . I did not claim, and had no need to 'claim' my mother, that time, since it had already been agreed upon at the beginning of May that she would stay with *me* . . . My mother was to stay until the Sunday, 31st, or the Monday, June 1st. She was coming over to help me in making applications on my brother's behalf . . . 'She spent the night of Friday (29th) and Saturday (30th) at the Impasse Ronsin, for our intention was to start together the next morning on a round of calls with the object of assisting my brother. That night my mother slept, as she always did, in my room. In the house, there also slept my husband and Rémy Couillard."

In reply to a Question. "There were three keys to the gate of the door separating the small garden from the Impasse Ronsin. One was in the hands of my husband; Mariette (the cook) had the second, and Rémy Couillard (the valet) had the third. Three months before the murder, Couillard lost his key. Two months before the murder I asked my husband to

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have the lock of the gate changed, for I feared that some one might enter at night. After the murder I had doubts concerning Couillard, on account of that lost key . . . I several times begged my husband to have the lock changed, and Mariette did the same, but he would not consent. He said it meant nothing at all, that thieves that wanted to enter would do so in spite of a locked gate. . . . I even remember that at Bellevue on May 21st, and in the presence of Count and Countess d'Arlon, M. Maillard, and M. Boeswilwald, I again asked my husband about that lock, pointed out his carelessness, and reminded him of my anxieties."

Question. "How is it that, being so nervous on the matter, and being aware of M. Steinheil's lack of initiative, you did not have the lock changed yourself?"

Answer. "I didn't—I yielded to my husband's remark that thieves were not hindered by a locked gate . . ."

In reply to a Question. "On the eighteenth of May I went to Bellevue intending to stay there for at least a month. In 1906 and 1907 I had similar stays there. In May 1908, I settled down at Bellevue with the two youngest of the six children of the Buissons, and with Marthe. The only servant there was Mariette. M. Buisson and his son Pierre (the *fiancé* of Marthe) were in Paris, but came frequently, of course. My husband spent part of his time in Paris, and part of his time at Bellevue. He slept sometimes in Paris, but when he came to sleep at 'Vert-Logis' (the name of our Bellevue villa), he usually let me know by telephone . . . Before settling down at Vert-Logis, we concealed in a secret place in the dining-room (a hole in the wall hidden by furniture) the silver plate and also certain jewels . . ."

In reply to a Question. "To enter the house from the garden there are two doors, one opening on to the butler's pantry the other on to the verandah. Both these doors were always locked at night, but in order to allow any of us who might come home late to enter, the key of the one door was not left in the lock. The key of the pantry door was then left on a small stand, and that of the main door on a table in the verandah. The one who entered last when he—or

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she—knew that every one was at home, would leave the key in the door."

In reply to a Question. "After May 18th, my husband slept at Bellevue, or in Paris according to his work. He spent two or three nights a week at the Impasse Ronsin. On such occasions Rémy Couillard slept in his usual room, near the entrance to the attic, above the studio (third floor). But when my husband slept at Vert-Logis, the valet slept in the verandah, on a couch. He had a revolver, which on such occasions my husband handed to him. When my husband returned to the Impasse, Couillard returned the revolver to him —I could not assert that it was regularly returned, for I was at Bellevue at the time, but I have every reason to believe it was, for I have always seen a revolver on my husband's table, whenever he slept in Paris."

In reply to a Question. "I did not go once to Paris between May 18th and Friday, May 29th. I was kept at Bellevue looking after the little Buissons, who were unwell and whom I nursed. I went to Paris on Friday, May 29th, only on account of my mother's arrival. On the previous day, my husband had lunched with us at Bellevue, and had spent the rest of the day and the night there. He told us that day, that Couillard, who was extremely nervous, had replaced 'Dick,' our watch-dog which, as in other years, had come with us to Bellevue, by a dog called 'Turk,' which belonged to M. and Mme. Geoffroy (daughter and son-in-law of Mariette, my cook). My husband said he was furious about it, because the dog had ruined, with its paws, the sketch for a stained-glass window he had just completed. And he added: 'To-morrow morning I shall send that dog back!' On the Friday, May 29th, early in the morning, my husband returned to Paris together with Marthe, who had to attend a lecture that morning, and who was to lunch with her father and, I believe, with Pierre Buisson, at the Impasse Ronsin. It was agreed that I should await Marthe's return before leaving Bellevue to go and meet my mother at the station in Paris. During my absence, Marthe would watch over the little Buissons whom I did not wish to be left alone. During the afternoon, after I had given the

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children their tea, Marthe returned to Vert-Logis. As had been arranged, Pierre Buisson had come with her, and was to spend the night there, so that the children should be less lonely in the night. My husband was to spend the night in Paris, as he did not wish to let my mother and me be left alone in town. On that Friday, I reached Paris (Montparnasse Station) towards 5 P. M., and went straight, by the Underground, to the Gare de l'Est, where my mother was due at six." When I left Bellevue (the journey to Paris takes twenty minutes by rail) I wore three rings . . . (Later on, I will fully explain what has been called "the mystery of the jewels," of which so much was made against me.)

The programme for that evening and the following day was this: My mother was to spend the night at the Impasse Ronsin. My sister, Mme. Herr, would dine with us—but she did not come to the station, and afterwards I heard she was unable to come. At the station, therefore, I was alone to receive my mother. It had been arranged that even in the case of my sister and her family dining on the Saturday evening with us, my mother, my husband, and I would go afterwards to Bellevue to join Marthe and her friends; unless, of course, my mother's state of health would not allow it. On the Friday evening—or the Saturday morning—I received a note from my sister saying she could not come to lunch or to dinner, that she was going to a concert on the Saturday evening, but that she relied on my mother calling on her in the afternoon.

"On the Friday, May 29th, as soon as my mother and I reached home, I told Couillard to return the Geoffroys their dog, and scolded him for having borrowed it without permission, and also because the dog, by ruining one of M. Steinheil's drawings, had made the latter lose a whole week's work."

Question. "Why such haste in returning that dog?"

(The judge's idea was quite obvious. Convinced that I was guilty, even before he ever examined me, he thought the fact that I had got rid of the dog a proof of my guilt. I had, "of course," done it in order that the dog might not bark at my accomplices or bark while the murders were being committed!)

Answer. "My husband had told me the day before that the

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dog would have to go the moment he reached home, and Couillard had not yet returned the dog to its owners."

Question. "What witnesses have you to prove that your husband wished to get rid of the dog *at once?*"

Answer. "I believe Marthe and Mariette the cook heard my husband make the remark."

Question. "Why deprive your house so soon of a watch-dog when it was deprived of its usual guardian—the dog, Dick?"

Answer. "What importance did it have? . . . As a matter of fact, Turk hardly barked and was useless; besides, not belonging to the house, the dog was up to all kinds of mischief."

Question. "How can one admit that Couillard, in order to be protected, should borrow a dog that did not bark?"

Answer. "I don't know . . . All I can say is that Couillard, just as he was about to take the dog back to the Geoffroys, told me that his idea in having the dog with him was that he would feel less lonely and more safe with 'something living' near him."

Question. "How did you know that the dog did not bark?"

Answer. "Madame Geoffroy, the daughter of my cook, frequently came to the house, accompanied by her dog, and I noticed that it never barked."

Question. "A number of your statements on this point contradict those you made on June 20th (less than a month after the murder). From the latter, it appears that Couillard borrowed the dog with M. Steinheil's permission, and that it was after M. Steinheil himself had ordered him to return the dog to its owners that the valet did so on the Friday evening."

Answer. "The statement you have just read to me I made when I was still seriously ill, so ill indeed that I had not the strength to listen to the reading of my statements after I had made them. Besides, what contradiction is there between the declarations I have just made and those I made then?"

Question. "From the statements of Rémy Couillard on May 31st (a few hours after the murder) to the commissary of

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police, it appears that the dog was returned to the Geoffroys, not on the day you say (Friday) but only on the following day, Saturday, May 30th."

Answer. "I can only say that it was on Friday evening that I told Couillard to return the dog."

In reply to a Question. "It was later on, after investigations had been made, that I learned that my husband had on Saturday, May 30th, withdrawn £40 from the Crédit Lyonnais. I did not hear of the fact at the time, but I am certain that my husband must have gone in the afternoon [Banks in France do not close at 1 P.M., as in England, on Saturdays], for when I left the Impasse Ronsin at about 11.30 to go to lunch with Marthe and the Buissons at Bellevue, my husband had not left the house. I also heard, after the police investigations had been made, that my husband had paid a few bills, including the bill of the carpenter."

Question. "Besides what may have remained of the £40, what amount of money do you think there was in the house?"

Answer. "On that day, there must have been in the writing-table of the boudoir, about £300." (Here I explained how that money was there, and where it had come from.)

Question. "But, on November 26th, 1908, you said there was about £120 in that desk?"

Answer. "On the 26th November, 1908" (I beg the reader carefully to remember that date, for it is one of the most dramatic in my eventful life), "I was out of my mind, and was not responsible for what I did or said, and forgot for a moment the £200 in a separate envelope."

Question. "Are you sure that envelope with the £200 ever existed?"

Answer. "It did exist. My husband was chairman of the 'Boulogne Ceramics Co.' Early in 1908 he told me that it would shortly ask for an increase of capital—an appeal which I knew he, and also M. Buisson and his brother would answer. I don't know when my husband intended to pay the money in, but he had told me he would contribute £200. At any rate, I had not yet given my consent, for I had my doubts

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about the prospects of the company." (Here I may add that the examining magistrate himself informed me that M. Buisson and his brother had made their payments to the company in June.)

In reply to a Question. "On the Saturday morning, early, (Saturday, May 30th, 1908), finding my mother very tired and being somewhat anxious about her health, I sent for Dr. Acheray, who prescribed for her, ordered her to stay in bed, and strictly forbade her to go out. After the doctor's departure, my mother absolutely insisted on calling, in the afternoon, on Mme. Herr and on making another call, about which she gave me no explanations. It was agreed between us that I should lunch at Bellevue and that when I returned at 5 or 6 P.M., we should see whether her state of health would allow her to travel to Bellevue, or she would have to remain at the Impasse Ronsin. I left the house at about 11.30 A.M. to take the train to Bellevue."

Question. "Then you did not make the call or calls you had planned to make, in your brother's interests?"

Answer. "No. My mother's indifferent health did not allow her to come with me and we had postponed these visits till the following Monday."

Question. "What were those steps you were to take?"

Answer. "M. Dennery, Secretary to the Under-Secretary of State for 'Postes et Telegraphes' protected my brother, and it was on him that my mother and I intended to call."

In reply to a Question. "My mother having said she would spend most of the afternoon with Mme. Herr, I only returned to the Impasse Ronsin towards 5.30 P.M. My mother was at home and so was my husband. My mother was lying down on the sofa in the verandah; she suffered a great deal in her legs. She told me she had been to my sister's and that going up and coming down the stairs had been most trying . . . My mother still hoped, however, to be able to travel with us to Bellevue. 'We will put off our decision till after dinner,' she said, 'I will see how I feel then, and find whether I can go to Bellevue or not.' Had my mother felt better later on, we would have caught the 8.30 P.M. train. My mother told

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me some details about her visit to my sister. She said they had talked together about a marriage planned for my brother Julien."

In reply to a Question. "I had reached Bellevue that day towards noon. I lunched at Vert-Logis with the children, and then went for a drive through the woods with them. After the children's tea, I went with Marthe to the Bellevue station. I reached the Gare Montparnasse at about 5.30 P.M. and on foot I went straight home (a ten minutes' walk). On the way I called at the druggist's for my mother's medicine and also at Potin's (the grocer's stores)."

Question. "At what time that day did you telephone to M. Bdl.?"

Answer. "At ten in the morning. I 'phoned to him from my room, where my mother was lying in bed, and she heard what I said. M. Bdl. and I had parted in the middle of May, but I occasionally wrote or telephoned to him. I began by telling M. Bdl. that I was quite well, but that my mother (whom he knew) was ill. I remember that I could not hear a word of what M. Bdl. said, and finally I broke out laughing and put the receiver back in its place."

In reply to a Question. "It was only after dinner, at about 8 P.M. that I asked my mother if she felt well enough to go to Bellevue . . . I had to ask her, in order to know whether I should ask M. Buisson to go and sleep there or not."

Question. "Thus, you had warned M. Buisson that he might have to go to Bellevue and spend the night there?"

Answer. "Yes. This is what happened. Whilst I was at Vert-Logis, M. Buisson telephoned to me after lunch at about 1.30 or 2 P.M., just as I was about to go for a drive with the children. He wanted to ask me how his children were. Afterwards I told him that my mother—of whose arrival he had heard on the previous day—was not well, and did not know whether she would be able to come to Bellevue to sleep; and I asked him if, in case she would not come, he would mind running down to Bellevue and spending the night with his little children. He replied he would come to Bellevue at about

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10.30 P.M. in any case, whether we could or could not be there ourselves. I had told my daughter during the afternoon that if we came to Bellevue in the evening I would warn her on the telephone. As a matter of fact, I considered it as unlikely, owing to my mother's health."

(Quoted from *Dossier*, Cote 3213–3218.)

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CHAPTER XIII

THE FATAL NIGHT

CONTINUING my story, I shall still quote the more important passages from the evidence I gave to M. André concerning the fatal night of May 30th–31st, 1908, and various facts more or less connected with the murder. That will enable the reader to see clearly how it all happened, but also, incidentally, to get some idea of the methods of a French examining magistrate.

Question. "Since your last interrogation, a number of letters have been handed to us: twenty-four letters from your mother to your brother Julien, dated from January 4th, 1908, to May 30th, 1908. Those letters, *on the whole*, tally with your statements, especially as regards your illness at the beginning of 1908, the plans for your brother's marriage, and the intention to help him by calling on M. Dennery, and the fact that you called in Dr. Acheray to see your mother on the morning of May 30th. On the other hand, they contain remarks which contradict certain of your statements. For instance, on May 19th your mother wrote to your brother that during her forthcoming stay in Paris she would put up at M. Herr's, but the following day she mentioned that you had written and 'phoned to her, with the result that she would put up at your house for one night at least. This proves that your mother only decided to put up at the house in the Impasse Ronsin after you had pressed her?"

Answer. "I can only tell you that when my mother was staying with me, at the beginning of May, it was agreed between us that she would put up at my house when she returned to Paris later on. Towards May 20th she wrote to

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me that she felt very ill, and at the same time gave me to understand that, yielding to Mme. Herr's wishes, she would put up at her house. I told her that if she came to me I would nurse her and that she would be attended by an excellent doctor—M. Acheray, who lived almost next door to us. I added that matters would be easier as regarded the call on M. Dennery if she were staying with me. I very much wanted to have my mother at home because at my sister's house she would have to climb five flights of stairs, and, further, because I wished Dr. Acheray to examine her, as he knew her well, having on other occasions acted as her doctor."

Question. "In any case, there is a most striking coincidence here. It is just about May 18th—that is, at the time when you settled down at Bellevue with the young Buissons, who seem to need your permanent presence at the time when your Paris home is disorganised—that you compel your mother to promise to stay with you during the forthcoming visit!"

Answer. "The Buisson children were not so ill that I had to be constantly near them at Vert-Logis. The main object in having them at Bellevue was that they should enjoy the fresh air of the country; and when I was away my daughter was perfectly capable of looking after them. As for my Paris home, how could it be 'disorganised' when my husband, my daughter and myself were there frequently!"

In reply to a Question. "When, on the Saturday, May 30th, I returned from Bellevue, I stopped, as I have said, at the chemist's to fetch the various medicines Dr. Acheray had prescribed for my mother. At Potin's I bought a lobster, a pot of mayonnaise sauce, some cakes and some fruit. Then I walked straight home. My husband and I ate lobster, but my mother ate only a bit of it; she preferred coffee and milk and a slice of buttered toast. At Vert-Logis that evening my daughter Marthe was alone with the two little Buissons and Mariette, the old cook. The children usually went to bed at nine, and Mariette, as a rule, retired afterwards. But that night she had of course to await M. Buisson's arrival.

"At the Impasse Ronsin we dined that day at 7.30. Before dinner my mother and I had had a long chat about

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family affairs and plans, whilst my husband remained in his studio. The dinner was merry. My husband was unusually cheerful and content. He talked about various schemes to improve matters at the Boulogne Ceramics Company, and said he would go to Italy to copy some old *faience*. My husband drank some wine and water. After dinner none of us took any liqueurs. I went round the garden with my husband, and then we joined my mother, who was resting in the verandah. She suffered more and more in her legs; I took her shoes and stockings off and rubbed her with some vaseline. Towards 9 P.M. we all three went upstairs to bed. Before that, my husband had locked the doors—or rather the door, for he had only to close the verandah door. The door of the pantry, which it was the valet's duty to close, must, I suppose, have been closed by Couillard after we had retired. At the time when we went upstairs Couillard was washing up.

"According to the rule in force whenever we were at home, and which he had observed the previous night, Couillard was to sleep in his room on the third floor, near the attic. I supposed that, also according to custom, he had already handed back the revolver to my husband on the previous day (May 29th). But, after the drama, during the judicial investigation, I found that Couillard had not returned the revolver, for when questioned by M. Hamard (Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department) about the revolver, he, in my sight, took it from the pocket of his blue apron. I had told M. Hamard that my husband usually kept his revolver by him in his room, in the drawer of his bedside table, and it was because M. Hamard had been unable to find it that he had been led to ask Couillard some questions about it."

In reply to a Question. "I don't know at what time Rémy Couillard went to bed on the 30th May. That night my husband occupied his own bedroom. I was in my daughter's room, for I had given my bedroom to my mother so that she might be more comfortable, my daughter's bed being smaller than mine and my mother a little stout. Besides, whenever my mother stayed with us she occupied my bedroom. She

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A VIEW OF THE VERANDA OF THE HOUSE IN THE IMPASSE RONSIN

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slept in my daughter's room only when I was seriously ill in bed—in 1907 and 1908."

In reply to a Question. "On May 30th, my mother herself placed my rings, as we went to bed, in her room (my bedroom). I had taken them off downstairs on the verandah, when I rubbed my mother with vaseline. Just as we went upstairs, my husband told Couillard to bring up some 'grogs.'"

Question. "Was it a habit in your house to take 'grogs' at night?"

Answer. "No, it was not a habit. When I was tired, I took some hot water with rum, and in the evening of May 30th I was very tired. After dinner, when we chatted on the verandah, I had said I would drink a hot 'grog' before going to bed, and my husband and my mother said they would do the same. That was why my husband or I told Couillard to bring up some hot water, sugar, the bottle of rum, and three glasses. Why didn't we drink the 'grogs' downstairs? Because I wanted my mother to take hers while in bed. Rémy Couillard came up with a tray which he placed on a small table in the bath-room, and then he withdrew. When Rémy brought the tray, I was in the bath-room; my mother was in her room and already in bed. My husband was in his room, but not yet in bed. I called him. He put water and sugar in two glasses and I poured out the rum. Then my husband and I went together to my mother. She drank a little and placed the glass back on her bedside table. Before taking the 'grog' to my mother, I tasted the one my husband had prepared for himself. I thought it was too strong, and my husband added some hot water."

Question. "It was you who wanted a 'grog,' and now I find that no 'grog' was prepared for you, and of your husband's grog you only had a sip!"

(My counsel explained to me afterwards that the judge's idea was that I had put poison or some sleeping draught in those two grogs!)

Answer. "I intended preparing mine a little later, just as I was about to get into bed, so as to drink it quite hot. As a matter of fact, when I was in bed, I called my husband and

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he brought me my grog. He made me drink, then placed the glass — I don't remember where.

"After my mother had emptied her glass, I had sat down on her bed and we had chatted for a quarter of an hour. But as she and I were very tired and sleepy, I went to my room, and I was in bed when my husband brought me the grog."

Question. "Couillard has stated that your husband was already in bed when he brought up the tray. He saw that through the door of your husband's room, which was open."

Answer. "Couillard made a mistake. Besides, how could he have seen my husband in bed! There was no light in my husband's room."

Question. "There was a light in the bath-room where the valet placed the tray, and since the door of the bedroom was open, that bedroom must have been light enough."

Answer. "No, for the gas in the bath-room was only half turned on."

In reply to a Question. "At the end of my chat with my mother, I kissed her and said: 'Till to-morrow!' And when my husband brought me the grog, I bade him good-night and asked him to leave the door open, so that, if my mother felt ill during the night, she might easily be heard by us, I was dead tired and went to sleep almost at once."

Question. "Describe what you know of the crime."

Answer. "I started up out of my sleep, and felt something on my face. I then heard a man's voice saying: 'Tell us where your parents' money is . . .' Now, before I go any further, I would like to say that I cannot promise you to describe that terrible night in exactly the same words as I used when I described it on May 31st, a few hours after the crime . . . I pulled the cloth off my head and face. There was a light in the room, and I saw three men and a woman: a dark man standing near me; a dark man by the door of the boudoir; a red-bearded man on the other side, that is, near the mantelpiece, and a red-haired woman near my bed.

"They repeated: 'Where is your parents' money?' Frightened, trembling, and seeing that the woman was pointing a revolver at my right temple, I said 'There' . . . and pointed

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to the boudoir; the woman remained near me, still holding the revolver against my head, and with her other hand she held my arm tightly. . . . I was terrified . . . I heard my mother cry out to me 'Meg, Meg!' . . . That gave me a little courage. Then the woman said, 'Come on, girl, be good. Tell us where the jewels are.' I was afraid to say they were in my mother's room (really my room), in the drawer of the wardrobe . . . I said to them all 'Don't kill me! Say you won't kill any one . . .' Then they bound me and put a cloth on my face . . . And that is all. I don't remember anything else . . ."

Question. "Have you really no other recollections?"

Answer. "I remember the appearance of those people. They had lanterns . . . The man near the chimney had one, also the man near my bed. The man near the door of the boudoir held a revolver . . . After they had bound me to the bed, one man climbed on me, stood on my body, and hurt me terribly. I could not cry because I was already gagged. They bound my hands . . . At a certain moment, I don't remember when, I heard the twelve strokes of midnight . . . I say midnight, but it was perhaps eleven o'clock. There were many, many strokes, that is all I can say. It was the big grandfather's clock in the hall . . . on the ground floor."

Question. "And that is all?"

Answer. "I can tell you what those people were like. The man near me had a long black beard. He was very pale, had dark eyes and a big nose. The man near the boudoir was also very dark, and his eyes were terrible. The one with the red beard looked rather stupid, bewildered, scared . . . As for the red-haired woman, she was fearfully ugly, had black eyes, frizzy hair and a wicked mouth."

Question. "Is that all?"

Answer. "That is all I remember now."

Question. "What else?"

Answer. "Oh! their clothes, of course! They all wore long black gowns, even the woman. M. Hamard asked me if they wore smocks or ecclesiastical habits, gaberdines. I said the sleeves were flat, and the gowns were long, straight, all one

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piece, as it were. I saw no collars, no hands, only those black gaberdines . . . and then, the light of their lanterns dazzled me, and there were all those looking-glasses in the room, Marthe's room . . . and it all went so rapidly . . . I also received a blow on my head. It came from the side where the woman stood, but I could not tell if it was the woman that struck the blow . . . I also heard a voice say: 'Finish her off!' They spoke . . . One man said: 'No, leave the girl (*la petite*) alone. It was the woman who wanted to kill me.' "

Question. "Which of the men was it who spared you?"

Answer. "I don't know. My head was covered at the time. The man had a foreign accent. He had spoken before . . . It was the man who had said: 'Tell us where your parents' money is.' "

In reply to a Question. "I felt them seize both my hands. They fastened them above and behind my head to the bars of the bed . . . They bound my hands, separately, that is, my arms apart . . . I felt a rope round my neck and there was a cloth on my head. They also bound my feet. I did not feel them bind me round the body; it was later on that I heard I had been bound round the body."

Question. "Did the ropes with which your hands were tied hurt you?"

Answer. "My hands were not tightly bound. They did not hurt me much."

Question. "Did the rope round the neck hurt?"

Answer. "No . . . I don't know. I was terrified. I thought that I had been blinded, that I was dead, that it was all over . . ."

Question. "Did the ropes round your feet hurt you?"

Answer. "Yes, very much. But I did not feel it at the time. It was only when I came back to my senses several times, and that was terrible."

In reply to a Question. "They gagged me with cottonwool, but I don't remember at what precise moment. The cotton-wool was forced down my mouth. It nearly choked me and I thought I was dying. When I came back to my senses, I had an awful sensation of agony. I was stifling . . . I

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moved my arms, but felt that by doing so I was strangling myself; I felt that when I moved my arms either to the right or to the left, they acted upon the rope round my neck and I felt then a terrible pressure on my throat . . . But when I did not move at all, the rope round my neck did not hurt. The cottonwool made breathing almost impossible. So I began to push it forward with my tongue. It was very difficult to remove the gag . . . I moved my tongue; I moved my jaw . . . I turned and twisted the cottonwool in my mouth and it was a long time before I could remove it. I even think I had not got rid of it all when the ropes were cut. The ropes round my hands were cut by Rémy Couillard, I believe. Whilst I moved the wadding with my tongue, my mouth was quite dry . . . I breathed as best I could . . . No, I don't know whether I breathed with my nose only. I cannot remember things quite clearly. I came back to my senses several times, but it was only at daybreak, when I recovered a little, that I was able to remove the gag . . ."

Question. "When you moved your head, you say that those movements tightened the rope round your neck?"

Answer. "I felt I was strangling myself; but I tried to be brave . . . I also tried to free my hands, but found it was impossible, for when I moved them the ropes tightened round my neck . . . I did not know if the men were still there . . . My mind was in a whirl . . . But I had courage, for they had said they would not kill any one."

Question. "At what moment?"

Answer. "When they asked where the jewels were I had beseeched them to kill no one."

Question. "And they said they would not kill any one?"

Answer. "No, they didn't reply; but as they did not kill me I thought they had spared the lives of the others. I had heard no noise, and I did not think that either my husband or my mother was dead. I thought they had been gagged and bound like myself . . . I called them I don't know how many times. They did not answer, and I waited for some one to come, and I was almost mad . . . When did I call them? I

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family affairs and plans, whilst my husband remained in his studio. The dinner was merry. My husband was unusually cheerful and content. He talked about various schemes to improve matters at the Boulogne Ceramics Company, and said he would go to Italy to copy some old *faience*. My husband drank some wine and water. After dinner none of us took any liqueurs. I went round the garden with my husband, and then we joined my mother, who was resting in the verandah. She suffered more and more in her legs; I took her shoes and stockings off and rubbed her with some vaseline. Towards 9 P.M. we all three went upstairs to bed. Before that, my husband had locked the doors—or rather the door, for he had only to close the verandah door. The door of the pantry, which it was the valet's duty to close, must, I suppose, have been closed by Couillard after we had retired. At the time when we went upstairs Couillard was washing up.

"According to the rule in force whenever we were at home, and which he had observed the previous night, Couillard was to sleep in his room on the third floor, near the attic. I supposed that, also according to custom, he had already handed back the revolver to my husband on the previous day (May 29th). But, after the drama, during the judicial investigation, I found that Couillard had not returned the revolver, for when questioned by M. Hamard (Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department) about the revolver, he, in my sight, took it from the pocket of his blue apron. I had told M. Hamard that my husband usually kept his revolver by him in his room, in the drawer of his bedside table, and it was because M. Hamard had been unable to find it that he had been led to ask Couillard some questions about it."

In reply to a Question. "I don't know at what time Rémy Couillard went to bed on the 30th May. That night my husband occupied his own bedroom. I was in my daughter's room, for I had given my bedroom to my mother so that she might be more comfortable, my daughter's bed being smaller than mine and my mother a little stout. Besides, whenever my mother stayed with us she occupied my bedroom. She

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A VIEW OF THE VERANDA OF THE HOUSE IN THE IMPASSE RONSIN

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slept in my daughter's room only when I was seriously ill in bed—in 1907 and 1908."

In reply to a Question. "On May 30th, my mother herself placed my rings, as we went to bed, in her room (my bedroom). I had taken them off downstairs on the verandah, when I rubbed my mother with vaseline. Just as we went upstairs, my husband told Couillard to bring up some 'grogs.'"

Question. "Was it a habit in your house to take 'grogs' at night?"

Answer. "No, it was not a habit. When I was tired, I took some hot water with rum, and in the evening of May 30th I was very tired. After dinner, when we chatted on the verandah, I had said I would drink a hot 'grog' before going to bed, and my husband and my mother said they would do the same. That was why my husband or I told Couillard to bring up some hot water, sugar, the bottle of rum, and three glasses. Why didn't we drink the 'grogs' downstairs? Because I wanted my mother to take hers while in bed. Rémy Couillard came up with a tray which he placed on a small table in the bath-room, and then he withdrew. When Rémy brought the tray, I was in the bath-room; my mother was in her room and already in bed. My husband was in his room, but not yet in bed. I called him. He put water and sugar in two glasses and I poured out the rum. Then my husband and I went together to my mother. She drank a little and placed the glass back on her bedside table. Before taking the 'grog' to my mother, I tasted the one my husband had prepared for himself. I thought it was too strong, and my husband added some hot water."

Question. "It was you who wanted a 'grog,' and now I find that no 'grog' was prepared for you, and of your husband's grog you only had a sip!"

(My counsel explained to me afterwards that the judge's idea was that I had put poison or some sleeping draught in those two grogs!)

Answer. "I intended preparing mine a little later, just as I was about to get into bed, so as to drink it quite hot. As a matter of fact, when I was in bed, I called my husband and

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he brought me my grog. He made me drink, then placed the glass—I don't remember where.

"After my mother had emptied her glass, I had sat down on her bed and we had chatted for a quarter of an hour. But as she and I were very tired and sleepy, I went to my room, and I was in bed when my husband brought me the grog."

Question. "Couillard has stated that your husband was already in bed when he brought up the tray. He saw that through the door of your husband's room, which was open."

Answer. "Couillard made a mistake. Besides, how could he have seen my husband in bed! There was no light in my husband's room."

Question. "There was a light in the bath-room where the valet placed the tray, and since the door of the bedroom was open, that bedroom must have been light enough."

Answer. "No, for the gas in the bath-room was only half turned on."

In reply to a Question. "At the end of my chat with my mother, I kissed her and said: 'Till to-morrow!' And when my husband brought me the grog, I bade him good-night and asked him to leave the door open, so that, if my mother felt ill during the night, she might easily be heard by us, I was dead tired and went to sleep almost at once."

Question. "Describe what you know of the crime."

Answer. "I started up out of my sleep, and felt something on my face. I then heard a man's voice saying: 'Tell us where your parents' money is . . .' Now, before I go any further, I would like to say that I cannot promise you to describe that terrible night in exactly the same words as I used when I described it on May 31st, a few hours after the crime . . . I pulled the cloth off my head and face. There was a light in the room, and I saw three men and a woman: a dark man standing near me; a dark man by the door of the boudoir; a red-bearded man on the other side, that is, near the mantelpiece, and a red-haired woman near my bed.

"They repeated: 'Where is your parents' money?' Frightened, trembling, and seeing that the woman was pointing a revolver at my right temple, I said 'There' . . . and pointed

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to the boudoir; the woman remained near me, still holding the revolver against my head, and with her other hand she held my arm tightly. . . . I was terrified . . . I heard my mother cry out to me 'Meg, Meg!' . . . That gave me a little courage. Then the woman said, 'Come on, girl, be good. Tell us where the jewels are.' I was afraid to say they were in my mother's room (really my room), in the drawer of the wardrobe . . . I said to them all 'Don't kill me! Say you won't kill any one . . .' Then they bound me and put a cloth on my face . . . And that is all. I don't remember anything else . . ."

Question. "Have you really no other recollections?"

Answer. "I remember the appearance of those people. They had lanterns . . . The man near the chimney had one, also the man near my bed. The man near the door of the boudoir held a revolver . . . After they had bound me to the bed, one man climbed on me, stood on my body, and hurt me terribly. I could not cry because I was already gagged. They bound my hands . . . At a certain moment, I don't remember when, I heard the twelve strokes of midnight . . . I say midnight, but it was perhaps eleven o'clock. There were many, many strokes, that is all I can say. It was the big grandfather's clock in the hall . . . on the ground floor."

Question. "And that is all?"

Answer. "I can tell you what those people were like. The man near me had a long black beard. He was very pale, had dark eyes and a big nose. The man near the boudoir was also very dark, and his eyes were terrible. The one with the red beard looked rather stupid, bewildered, scared . . . As for the red-haired woman, she was fearfully ugly, had black eyes, frizzy hair and a wicked mouth."

Question. "Is that all?"

Answer. "That is all I remember now."

Question. "What else?"

Answer. "Oh! their clothes, of course! They all wore long black gowns, even the woman. M. Hamard asked me if they wore smocks or ecclesiastical habits, gaberdines. I said the sleeves were flat, and the gowns were long, straight, all one

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piece, as it were. I saw no collars, no hands, only those black gaberdines . . . and then, the light of their lanterns dazzled me, and there were all those looking-glasses in the room, Marthe's room . . . and it all went so rapidly . . . I also received a blow on my head. It came from the side where the woman stood, but I could not tell if it was the woman that struck the blow . . . I also heard a voice say: 'Finish her off!' They spoke . . . One man said: 'No, leave the girl (*la petite*) alone. It was the woman who wanted to kill me.' "

Question. "Which of the men was it who spared you?"

Answer. "I don't know. My head was covered at the time. The man had a foreign accent. He had spoken before . . . It was the man who had said: 'Tell us where your parents' money is.' "

In reply to a Question. "I felt them seize both my hands. They fastened them above and behind my head to the bars of the bed . . . They bound my hands, separately, that is, my arms apart . . . I felt a rope round my neck and there was a cloth on my head. They also bound my feet. I did not feel them bind me round the body; it was later on that I heard I had been bound round the body."

Question. "Did the ropes with which your hands were tied hurt you?"

Answer. "My hands were not tightly bound. They did not hurt me much."

Question. "Did the rope round the neck hurt?"

Answer. "No . . . I don't know. I was terrified. I thought that I had been blinded, that I was dead, that it was all over . . ."

Question. "Did the ropes round your feet hurt you?"

Answer. "Yes, very much. But I did not feel it at the time. It was only when I came back to my senses several times, and that was terrible."

In reply to a Question. "They gagged me with cottonwool, but I don't remember at what precise moment. The cotton-wool was forced down my mouth. It nearly choked me and I thought I was dying. When I came back to my senses, I had an awful sensation of agony. I was stifling . . . I

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moved my arms, but felt that by doing so I was strangling myself; I felt that when I moved my arms either to the right or to the left, they acted upon the rope round my neck and I felt then a terrible pressure on my throat . . . But when I did not move at all, the rope round my neck did not hurt. The cottonwool made breathing almost impossible. So I began to push it forward with my tongue. It was very difficult to remove the gag . . . I moved my tongue; I moved my jaw . . . I turned and twisted the cottonwool in my mouth and it was a long time before I could remove it. I even think I had not got rid of it all when the ropes were cut. The ropes round my hands were cut by Rémy Couillard, I believe. Whilst I moved the wadding with my tongue, my mouth was quite dry . . . I breathed as best I could . . . No, I don't know whether I breathed with my nose only. I cannot remember things quite clearly. I came back to my senses several times, but it was only at daybreak, when I recovered a little, that I was able to remove the gag . . ."

Question. "When you moved your head, you say that those movements tightened the rope round your neck?"

Answer. "I felt I was strangling myself; but I tried to be brave . . . I also tried to free my hands, but found it was impossible, for when I moved them the ropes tightened round my neck . . . I did not know if the men were still there . . . My mind was in a whirl . . . But I had courage, for they had said they would not kill any one."

Question. "At what moment?"

Answer. "When they asked where the jewels were I had beseeched them to kill no one."

Question. "And they said they would not kill any one?"

Answer. "No, they didn't reply; but as they did not kill me I thought they had spared the lives of the others. I had heard no noise, and I did not think that either my husband or my mother was dead. I thought they had been gagged and bound like myself . . . I called them I don't know how many times. They did not answer, and I waited for some one to come, and I was almost mad . . . When did I call them? I

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don't know . . . As soon as I could breathe, as soon as I began to realise that I was there, that I was alive . . . I had no strength left . . . I called as best I could . . ."

Question. "How did Rémy Couillard come to you in the morning?"

Answer. "I don't remember having called him . . . When I saw him I was afraid of him . . . When I saw him come near my bed I thought he was going to strangle me, and I don't remember having talked to him . . . All I remember is that I saw him go to the window and shout '*Au voleur!*' ('Thief, thief!')."

Question. "In what way do you suppose people might have entered your house on the night of May 30th–31st, 1908?"

Answer. "I suppose they entered by the gate in the Impasse, perhaps with the key which Couillard had lost. Then they must have passed through the pantry door. I suppose so, as I have since been told that that door had not been locked that night (for when M. Lecoq, a neighbour, heard Couillard's cries in the morning and came to the rescue, he had only to push that door to enter the house!); or perhaps they passed through the little kitchen window, for Couillard stated—and this also I heard later on—that he merely pulled that window to, without closing it, a thing he should never have done . . . I have also been struck by the fact that a ladder was seen against the kitchen. None of us had seen that ladder there on May 30th."

Question. "Explain to us why there were hardly any traces of acts of violence on the bodies of the victims—that is, of your mother and your husband?"

Answer. "I cannot tell. . . . I heard no struggle, no noise, that night . . ."

Question. "How do you explain that your husband was found with his legs bent under his thighs, in a kneeling position, and his arms stretched along his body, and that your mother had her arms resting on her breast—that is, in an attitude quite contrary to an attitude of defence?"

Answer. "How can I explain all this? . . . So much the better if they have not suffered too much . . ."

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Question. "How do you explain that you were not made to share the fate of your mother and your husband?"

Answer. "Ah! I cannot understand that. In any case, I regret with all my heart that I was not killed . . . My mother did not suffer much, it appears . . . But I have been through constant agonies; and then there was that awful night of the tragedy, when I felt I was dying . . . And all the time I was wondering what had happened to my mother and my husband. . . . Perhaps those people thought I would pull on the ropes and strangle myself . . . I don't know . . ."

Question. "How do you explain the fact that they could spare you when you were a dangerous witness—one who would be the more formidable, more implacable and relentless because the victims were your own mother and husband?"

Answer. "I don't know that they wanted me to live . . . The way they had bound me meant death to me at the slightest movement. It needed a woman with my strong will—I was thinking of my Marthe—and also with my good health, to stand what I went through and live . . ."

Question. "On May 31st, at 6 A.M., Rémy Couillard saw that you were bound, but the ropes were tied in so indifferent a manner that they left on your wrists and ankles only superficial marks, marks that were not lasting. It was also found that the rope round your neck was rather loose."

Answer. "There is nothing extraordinary in the fact, since I did not move . . ."

(Quoted from *Dossier*, Cote 3239.)

In reply to a Question. "Marthe had wished to send a little present to Lucie Ch.—on the occasion of her marriage which took place at the beginning of June (1908) (Lucie was the daughter of M. Ch., who had been for several years my most intimate friend). During the evening of May 30th (a few hours before the crime) either before or after dinner, I sent Couillard to M. Cher., with a card of Marthe's and a little Sèvres vase which I had in the cabinet of the drawing-room. I went upstairs to my room and packed the vase in some cottonwool. As a rule, I kept cottonwool in a small cabinet

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opposite the bed. I used all the cottonwool, then finding there was not enough to wrap up the vase properly, I fetched some more which was in a large boxroom on the same first floor. I had a great deal of cottonwool at home, on account of the fancy-work I did, especially small cushions. . . ."

Question. "What was that cottonwool which on May 31st was found on the floor in the room where you were in bed?"

Answer. "I don't know . . . I saw no cottonwool that morning. I only saw many people around me. In any case, there was no cottonwool in my room when I went to bed . . ."

In reply to a Question. "On the evening of May 30th, I don't remember who served out the soup, whether it was Couillard or myself . . . Usually it was Couillard who did so."

Question. "In his report, Dr. Balthazard (the Home Office medical expert) has demonstrated that the gag was taken from the sheet of cottonwool which was found near the mantelpiece, in the room where you spent the night!"

Answer. "I have nothing to say on that point. It was only long after the drama that I was told that some cottonwool had been found in the room."

Question. "Dr. Balthazard further demonstrated by 'physical' and chemical processes, that the gag could not have been in your mouth not even for a few seconds, for it contained no traces of saliva!"

Answer. "Then the gag which Dr. Balthazard examined was not the one which had been so long in my mouth."

(Quoted from *Dossier*, Cotes 3308–3310.)

(And here I would quote a passage from the speech made by my counsel, Maître Antony Aubin, at my trial):

"In order to demonstrate that Mme. Steinheil was never gagged at all and that she lies, this is the argument used: There never was in Mme. Steinheil's room but one piece of cottonwool that might have been a gag, the piece that was on the pillow, on the right side of it. Now this gag was at once put under seal, on the spot, without any possible mistake. Handed later on to Dr. Balthazard, he found that it had

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never been wetted with saliva; therefore, the 'gag' on the pillow had never been in Mme. Steinheil's mouth.

"But an important question now arises. How many pieces of cottonwool were placed under seal, on the Sunday morning (May 31st)? Four. There was cottonwool everywhere, so much so that some one present remarked: 'One seems to walk on cottonwool.'

"Seal number one containing the gag *'which the criminals forced into Mme. Steinheil's mouth,'* for those were the words written on the label attached to it—was put together without it being known by whom it (the gag) was picked up, who handed it to the Police Commissary, without its identity being ascertained if only by a question asked of Mme. Steinheil. No precaution was taken, there was no supervision—so that it is impossible to say whether the piece of cottonwool, placed under the seal, as *'having been forced into Mme. Steinheil's mouth,'* is really the one which had been seen on her pillow, and which she herself pointed out.

"To demonstrate that the piece of cottonwool from the pillow and the one examined by Dr. Balthazard are not the same one is easy enough.

"The gag, which was seen by one or two witnesses near the pillow, was also seen by three or four other witnesses in various places—on the floor, on a chiffonier, on a small table! The gag wanders about. But how can one wonder that, in the excitement which upset everybody—and everything—some mistake as to all those pieces of cottonwool occurred?

"There is another point. In what terms do the witnesses describe the wandering gag? As *a gag made of one single piece (pear-shaped), as big as the fist.* If then the one examined by the expert contains *one single piece* and answers to the description given, one will be able to admit that this gag, *pear-shaped, and in one piece,* is really the piece of wadding found on the pillow. But Doctor Balthazard himself described the piece of cottonwool he examined as follows: 'This gag is made of two pieces, one *rectangular,* the other *triangular* and almost equilateral.'

"How disastrous for the Prosecution . . . Besides, gentle-

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men, if the whole thing had been a sham, Mme. Steinheil, knowing of course the difference in appearance between dry cottonwool and moistened cottonwool, would not have failed to wet it, if only for a few seconds, especially as it was she who drew attention to the gag!"

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CHAPTER XIV

AFTER THE MURDER

I NEED hardly say that on Sunday, May 31st, I was in a terrible state of mind, and even on the verge of utter collapse.

At 6 A.M., it appears, Rémy Couillard came down, saw what had happened, went to the window and cried for help, and M. Lecoq, a neighbour, then joined him. Then the police came, also Dr. Acheray, and many others. . . .

I was in bed, after that night of horror and what I had gone through. I could hardly move or breathe. Everything seemed to whirl around me, and yet I had two thoughts. One was: "what had happened to my mother and my husband, and how are they?" (I did not know, of course, that they had both been strangled.) Couillard—so I heard afterwards—after untying the ropes which held me to the bed, had gone with M. Lecoq to the other rooms, and seen the bodies of my husband and my mother, but they had said nothing to me about it.

* * * * *

I hereafter quote the evidence given by this M. Lecoq, so that the reader may be present, as it were, at the discovery of the crime.

This day, June 23rd, 1908, before us, Leydet, examining magistrate. . . . has appeared, Lecoq, Maurice—twenty six years old—an engineer residing in the Impasse Ronsin, No. 6—who has stated:

On Sunday, May 31st, a little before 6 A.M., I heard shouts of "Thief! Thief! . . . My mistress is ill . . ." I hastily left my room which overlooks the yard of M. Bonnot's house.

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Rapidly I passed through a gate, which is never closed (separating the Bonnot and the Steinheil grounds) and entered the garden of the Steinheil villa. I cut across the lawn, and went and stood under the window from which Couillard was crying for help. He shouted, "Come, be quick!" I tried in vain to open the doors of the verandah and the drawing-room, which opened on to the garden. Finding I could not enter, I returned to the place under the window, and Couillard said to me: "Open the street door and pass through the kitchen." I went to the door in the Impasse Ronsin, and opened it by lifting up the lower latch. Then I walked to the pantry door, which I opened by merely turning the knob. I went through the hall, where I noticed nothing unusual, then walked up to the first floor. At the end of the staircase I saw the door of Mme. Steinheil's room, whom I had never seen, although she is a neighbour of mine. She was on her bed. At the same time Couillard left the window and went near the bed.

Mme. Steinheil then exclaimed: "We are saved, my poor Rémy!" and the latter said: "Look at my poor mistress . . ." Mme. Steinheil was in a state of extreme agitation, and kept swinging her arms one way and another. Her wrists and her head were free. . . . There were cords round her neck, not tight, and over her nightshirt. Her feet were still strongly fastened to the rails of the bed, but the cords did not press very tightly on the articulations. Rémy and I undid the cords (Couillard had before undone the other cords), and then Mme. Steinheil, panting, with haggard eyes, said in broken words—and she had several times the vision of the scenes which she was describing—that she had been assailed and ill-treated by three men and a horrible woman who took her for her daughter, and who had asked for her money. She also said that the woman wanted her to be killed. She said she suffered from her head, and wailed: "My head, my head, they have struck me." I touched her hair, but found no wound. Mme. Steinheil also said: "My husband . . . why does he not come?" I replied to calm her, "He is in the next room." Later, she asked for her daughter. She was a prey to con-

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stant terror, and all the time she lived through the scene of the night. Several times she cried: "I am afraid, I am afraid . . ." And when I told her: "Don't fear anything, I am here; I will go for assistance," she kept saying, "I don't fear you, but oh! that fierce woman, and those men, and those two lanterns." I left her for a short while, to go and find out what had happened in the house. The door of M. Steinheil's room was open, and I saw the body of a man, wearing only a shirt, in the space between two rooms (M. Steinheil's room and the bath-room). I returned to Mme. Steinheil's room, and taking the valet aside, I said to him: "There is a dead man, who is he?" Overwhelmed, Couillard replied: "It is perhaps my master." Since then, Couillard has told me that when he went through the rooms he had passed over the body of his master without noticing it was a corpse. I then returned to that body, and Couillard followed me at a distance. I bent forward, and placing my hand on his thigh, I found it was icy cold. I at once undid the cord round the neck, however, whilst realising that M. Steinheil had ceased to live. I then returned to Mme. Steinheil who had remained alone during those brief moments. A little later I took Couillard aside. He was all the time walking up and down the room, as if he were mad, and did nothing, although his mistress was asking, with great insistence, for Dr. Acheray.

I asked Rémy: "How many are you in the house?" He replied: "Three, without counting me." I then said: "Where is the third person?" He pointed to the door opposite that of M. Steinheil's room, and said: "There!" I found that the door was locked and that I could not open it. When I had asked for the way into the room, Couillard pointed, with a vague gesture to the end of the corridor; he was quite distracted, and a sudden suspicion flashed through my mind. I took him by the arms, and looking him straight in the eyes, said: "You must come with me." Couillard, who did not realise my suspicions, showed that he was quite ready to follow me, and my suspicions vanished entirely. At that moment there arrived, at the top of the staircase, the first policeman, and M. Geoffroy (son-in-law of Mariette Wolff, my cook—and

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a neighbour). I rapidly told the policeman all I knew, and together we walked to the end of the corridor. The policeman opened the door indicated by Couillard, and from the threshold we saw the body of Mme. Japy lying across her bed in the position where you (M. Leydet) found it.

Then other persons arrived. I remained some time near Mme. Steinheil, who was still in a state of great agitation, but whose terror was gradually diminishing. Doctor Puech arrived on the scene, but Mme. Steinheil asked for her own doctor, M. Acheray, whom Couillard had now gone to fetch.

Question. "What impression did Mme. Steinheil, whom you had never seen before, make on you as regards her age?"

Answer. "I had two strong impressions. *When I entered the room where Mme. Steinheil was lying I thought I stood before a young lady of about twenty: but when she talked about her husband and her daughter and when I observed her more closely she appeared to me as a woman of twenty-six.* I don't know the Steinheils, and did not even know their names."

Signed LECOQ
LEYDET.

(*Dossier*, Cote 71.)

In spite of this statement—and although it must seem evident to any one that if, after such a night of terror and agony, M. Lecoq took me for a girl of twenty, the murderers, who saw me in a dimmer light and when I was quietly resting, may easily have taken me for my daughter—the Prosecution declared (I quote from the Indictment itself) that: "She thought she was spared because the assassins, taking her for Marthe, took pity on her youth. Such a confusion is most unlikely, for Mme. Steinheil could not be taken for a young lady barely seventeen."

While the reader has still fresh in his—or her—mind the details of the crime, I will give all explanations on the matter of the "binding," as I have given those about the "gag."

The Indictment said: "The inquiries of medical experts have revealed quite early the contradictions and lies of Mme. Steinheil. She claimed that a cord had been fastened round

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her neck—but there were no traces of it." Elsewhere the same extraordinary Indictment declares: "Mme. Steinheil did her best to make the law believe that she had really been bound; but the traces left by the cords disappeared too rapidly to allow any one to believe in her statement."

How was I bound?

M. Lecoq declared that the cords round my feet were "securely fastened" to the bed. Couillard stated that "the cord went round the feet seven or eight times," and also that "the wrists were fastened over one another to the rails of the top of the bed, the arms being raised above and behind the head." (*Dossier*, Cote 3257.) Couillard further stated "the head was held by a cord fastened to the railings of the bed." True, on another occasion Couillard declared he "had unfastened the cords by pulling on one end, as one undoes the knot of bootlaces." But on the morning of May 31st he made some statements to one of the policemen, M. Debacq, who declared afterwards: "The valet told me and my colleagues that he had found his mistress *entirely secured* with cords, and that he had *cut* the cords with which she was bound." The expert, Doctor Balthazard, made a special report in which he asserted that one of the cords had a knot of a kind called "galley-knot" (*nœud de galère*) which it is most difficult to make and which is only used in certain professions (sailors, horse-dealers, &c.). Dr. Courtois-Suffit mentioned "grooves on the feet and hands, corresponding to the diameter of the cords." Dr. Lefevre, who had made the remark, so dangerous to my cause: "It is all a sham" (*c'est de la frime*), explained at my trial what he had exactly meant. His idea was that the way I had been bound could not be a source of great pain to me. Dr. Acheray found on my wrists and ankles "very clear and marked traces." In his report, dated June 23rd, 1908, Dr. Lefevre stated: "I found on the wrists and the ankles parallel lineal ecchymoses."

Finally, as regards the cord round my neck which the prosecution said left no traces and was quite loose, I will merely say that I myself stated that "the cord did not hurt when I did not move my head," and further that it was wound round

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my neck *over* the cloth which covered my head. When that cloth, which formed a kind of pad at the neck, was removed, the cord of course slipped down and became loose.

As I have stated, my first thoughts on that dreadful morning of May 31st, 1908, was for my mother and my husband.

My next thought was: What has been stolen during the night?—for, I repeat it, I could not guess that a murder had been committed.

Here I must hasten to state a most important point in the events of that fatal night . . .

One of the men of black gaberdines, the dark, tall man who stood near my bed when I was started out of my sleep, the only man who spoke—he had, or pretended to have, a foreign accent—the man who had asked for the money when he came near me a second time (for I had been left alone at one time with the horrible red-haired woman who pointed a revolver at my head), *that man, after the woman had said: "Now then, girl, tell us where the jewels are," asked me in a peremptory tone.* "AND WHERE ARE THE PEARLS AND THE PAPERS?" And I thought the man *knew* who I was, although from his first question ("Where is your parents' money?") it was clear he took me for my daughter. I was more terrified than ever. I thought of the mysterious German, of my husband's reticence, and also of his indiscretions . . . The man *knew* I had those pearls, and knew about the documents!

When asked where the money was, I had pointed to the boudoir, close to the room where my mother slept. Afterwards the red-haired woman asked me where the jewels were. As I have stated before, quoting from the evidence I gave seven months after the murder to M. André, examining magistrate, "I dreaded to say that the jewels were in my mother's room (that is, in *my* bedroom, where my mother slept), and that they were in the drawer of the wardrobe . . ." But, fearing to be killed, I said it, adding: "Don't kill me, and promise to kill no one." When the tall, dark man, with the foreign accent, asked me about "the pearls and the papers:"

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I said the pearls were with the other jewels, and the papers in the secret drawer of the desk. . . .

I was told, later on, that the drawers, on May 31st, were found in a state of great disorder, and that all the jewel-cases were empty. Three rings had been stolen, and a diamond crescent, and a few other jewels. The pearls had also disappeared from the case in which I kept them. I found this out when all the cases were shown to me.

(As for the talisman, the gold locket which the President had worn, it was in the drawer of a cupboard in the studio, and was not stolen.)

As I have already stated, after the conversation with M. de Balincourt about my husband's indiscretion, I had removed the "papers" from the drawer of the writing-table in the boudoir, where I had so long kept them, and had put them in a place of safety.

The money, the jewels, and the pearls disappeared that night, and also the documents. Not the genuine bundle, of course, but the dummy, on which I had written: "Private papers. To be burned after my death."

Early in the morning, the police-commissary of the district, M. Bouchotte, asked me all kinds of questions. I replied to them all, but I did not speak the whole truth: I said that I had been asked for the money and the jewels, but I did not add that I had further been asked for the pearls and the papers.

Why I did not must have already occurred to the reader.

I knew that my real friends had always refused to believe in anything that had been said against me as regards my past life and my private affairs. And I did not want them to alter their views about me, and know that I had not been faithful to my husband. And above all, there was Marthe, my only child, my beloved daughter! She was engaged to Pierre Buisson. If I mentioned the pearls and the documents, the truth about my "friendship" with the late President Félix Faure was sure to be discovered and disclosed, not only to my friends who had always taken my part, but even to my own child, and to her betrothed. There would be a terrible scandal, my daughter's

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marriage would be broken off. . . . Although I was at the time almost out of my mind, after the pain I had endured, and the terror of the night, I fully realised the danger of mentioning the pearls and the documents, and so I held my tongue.

Not only the police-commissary, but M. Leydet, the examining magistrate, and other officials came that morning and asked a number of questions.

I was pleased—if one can be pleased in such tragic circumstances!—to see that M. Leydet was the judge in charge of the case. I had known him for several years; he was a great friend of both my husband and myself and came frequently to the house. I made up my mind that I would tell him the whole truth, if the three men and the red-haired woman could not be traced.

But for the moment I was haunted by thoughts of my mother and my husband, and ill though I was, I would go to them and attend to them. I had repeatedly asked how they were, and I had been told they were "better."

It was during the afternoon that the horrible news that they had both been murdered was gradually broken to me. My whole being reeled under this overwhelming blow. I wanted to rush to my dear dead, to look upon them, guard them, close their eyes—but they would not let me . . . They said I was too weak, too ill . . . They said it was impossible . . . (Several weeks later, I heard that the two bodies had been taken to the Morgue for the autopsy during the morning of May 31st) . . . And all the time, I had to reply to endless questions . . . They wanted to know what had been taken, and so I asked that the drawers and all the jewel-cases should be brought to me. Detectives brought them in and put them on my bed. I then saw that all the jewels which President Faure had given me had been stolen, and the pearls too . . . M. Leydet seeing how upset I was, did his best to calm me . . . I said to him: "There is a secret recess in the drawing-room wall, behind the dresser . . . If you will bring to me what you find in there, I shall be better able to tell you what has been stolen during the night . . ."

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I besought M. Leydet to send for my daughter, who was at Bellevue. I thought: "As this has no importance, what does it matter whether the jewels are found or not? I need my daughter and she needs me to give her courage after the awful shock of losing her father and her grandmother. She worshipped them both . . ." Alas! how ill the poor darling looked when she arrived in the evening with the Buissons. (Mariette had come from Bellevue in the morning, having been summoned by Dr. Acheray. She had left Marthe with the Buissons, and it was they who broke the dreadful news to the child during the afternoon.)

It was Dr. Acheray who told me that Marthe had come, and at the same time he said there was a motor-ambulance downstairs to take me away . . . He did not want me to stay in the house where the ghastly murders had been committed. "You must go," he said, "and stay with the Buissons" (in Paris).

"If you will not let me see my mother and my husband," I replied, "allow me at least the consolation of remaining near them" . . . I insisted so much that the ambulance was sent back, and my poor little Marthe, after spending some time with me, went away—with M. Buisson, I believe.

I passed a terrible night . . . I longed to sleep, to forget the harrowing drama, if only for an hour, but I could not. And minute after minute hundreds of thoughts flashed through my mind . . . I lived through the fatal night again and again; I thought of the dead, of my daughter, of the future . . . And then I wondered who were the three men in black gaberdines and soft felt hats? Who was the red-haired woman? Why had they killed my mother and my husband? Why had I been spared? . . . I thought of the mysterious "German," of his threatening look . . . he knew his way about the house . . . And a key had been lost . . . I thought of many officials who hated me because I knew their secrets. I thought of the documents which one of the men had demanded . . . Perhaps they had killed my husband before awaking me? . . . Not my mother, for she had cried "Meg, Meg!" . . . I had heard her . . . Sometimes, it seemed to me that the fatal night had

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only been a nightmare? Nothing had happened. I was mad, I imagined things . . . Of course, my husband was now quietly sleeping in his room, and if I called my mother she would hear and come to me at once . . . And then, the acute pain from the blow I had received on the head, and feeling that there had been ropes round my neck, my feet, my hands, and wadding in my mouth, that I had been bound and gagged . . . And once more I lived through the night of terror, and it was worse than before, for I knew now that my husband and my mother had been killed . . .

Later, I was told that Dr. Acheray, M. Buisson and his wife, and the elder M. Boeswilwald had attended me during that night of agony. I heard that the doctor had to give me morphia injections two or three times, and that I was very near to death . . .

On the Monday, thanks to my doctor's care and devotion, I came back to life, as it were . . . And I can frankly say that I have regretted it since, more than once.

Many people visited the house. A magistrate came to "affix the seals." Detectives and policemen came . . . and journalists . . . I was still so ill, however, that the doctor insisted that I should be taken to some nursing home or to the house of friends. Count and Countess d'Arlon offered me their hospitality, and so did M. and Mme. Buisson. I accepted the offer of the d'Arlons, who, unlike the Buissons, had no children.

Letters and telegrams of condolence arrived in piles, from every part of France and from people in every walk of life. This I only knew because I was told. I had not the strength to read the messages.

On June 2nd I was told that my mother's body had been removed to a Protestant, and my husband's to a Catholic, church. (They dared not tell me the bodies were at the Morgue.) It was then, and only then, that I yielded to the pressing entreaties of the d'Arlons. I was taken to their house in an ambulance. It was terrible to me to leave that house where less than forty-eight hours before I had been chatting with my husband about our summer . . . In the

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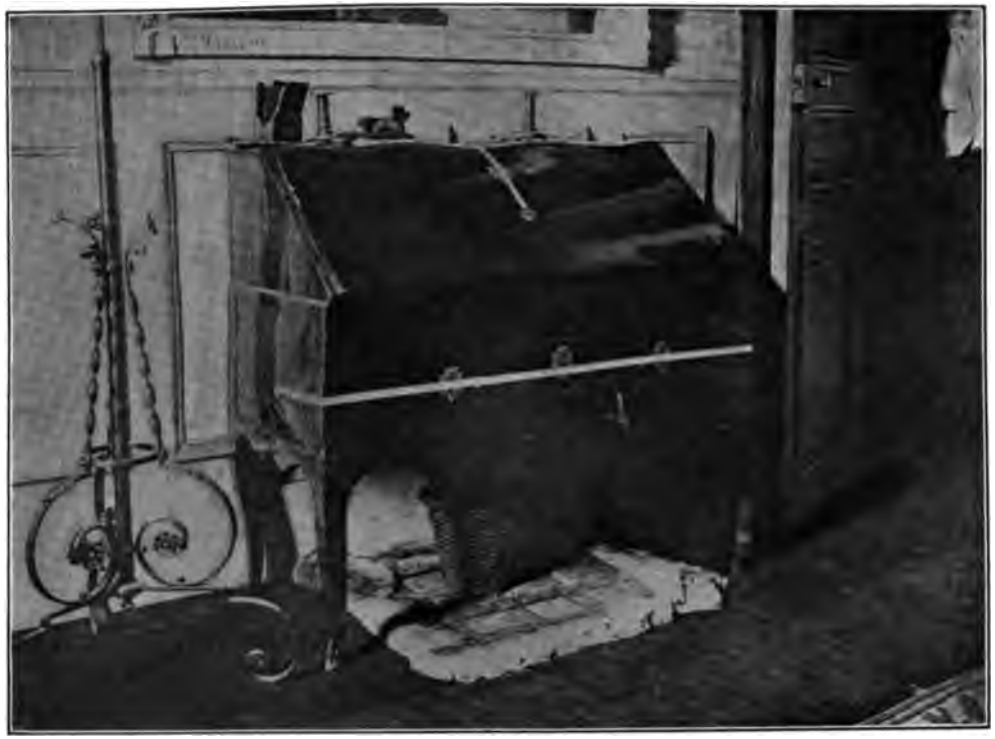

THE DESK (WITH SEALS AFFIXED) IN THE BOUDOIR, FROM WHICH THE MONEY AND THE DUMMY PARCEL OF DOCUMENTS WERE STOLEN ON MAY 30-31ST, 1908

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garden I saw the rose-trees laden with white roses, which my mother had so much admired only two days ago! . . .

In the Impasse there was an immense crowd, and another near the *Ecole Militaire*, near which the d'Arlons lived. The crowd were hostile. What did it mean? . . . I could not understand . . . Again I thought of the documents, of the pearls . . . Mme. Buisson, who was with me in the ambulance, trembled with fear . . . Later I was told that we had been escorted by detectives, to protect me! . . .

At last I arrived at the d'Arlons. Marthe was there. She was so very tender and affectionate, and I realised that she knew nothing about my life, about Félix Faure . . . There was no semblance of reproach in her pure little face, no question in her big brown eyes . . . I breathed again.

On the Wednesday (June 3rd), Dr. Acheray, finding I was worse, ordered a nurse. He also told me that I should soon be interrogated by M. Hamard and M. Leydet. "Tell them everything you know," he recommended; "the public seems to suspect you . . ."

I spent hours of torture. I wondered what I should say. I had already been asked about the jewels that had disappeared on the night of May 30th–31st. Was I to speak of those given me by M. B., the Attorney-General, and years later by President Faure (which had been stolen), and most of which were exactly copied from those my husband had given me, but set with more valuable stones? . . . But if I did, my reputation would be ruined in the eyes of my daughter, who worshipped her mother and who was engaged to be married, and of many friends who believed implicitly in me . . . No, no, since the jewels had been stolen I would describe them without saying whence they came, and I would alter the duplicates I had at Bellevue.

Here a clear explanation becomes necessary, inasmuch as the prosecution tried to prove that ***no jewels had been stolen*** and that I was the murderer. The jewel problem (***la question des bijoux***) was perhaps the most complex of all in that mysterious affair; and, although I spoke the whole truth to M. André, who became my examining magistrate after M.

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Leydet, I was not believed, and there were inevitably such contradictions between the statements I made on the matter at various times that my case became prejudiced. And yet this jewel problem was no problem at all, as the reader will no doubt agree after the following explanation:

Besides the money and the ten large pearls and my mother's jewels, there were stolen on the night of the double murder a diamond crescent, a few minor jewels of no great value, a gold chain and three valuable rings.

The diamond crescent which was stolen had been given me by President Faure, but I had a similar one at Bellevue, given me by my husband, from which it had been copied (only with better stones, as I stated before). I had thus been able in the days of Félix Faure to wear his crescent (worn as a brooch or in the hair) without my husband being able to make remarks. True, the President had given me a brooch with the three colours of France, and a Lalique comb, but he had done so at the beginning of our acquaintance and in the presence of my husband. I may at once say that the comb was in a cabinet in the drawing-room, and was not stolen. The cornflower-marguerite-poppy brooch was stolen, but I did not mention it, because it would have led to questions about my friendship with Félix Faure.

The three rings I possessed in triplicate: Firstly the three given me by my husband; secondly, three exact copies of them given me—two by the Attorney-General, one by the President—and thirdly, three exact copies in paste.

Why this last set? Because at one time of financial difficulties, my husband had asked me to let him pledge the three rings he had given me, and I consented, after he had had those rings cheaply copied in paste, so that our friends might not notice that my rings were gone. For how could I at that time wear the other three *real* rings without my husband noticing it at once? Afterwards, the pledged rings were redeemed, and so it happened that I possessed, before the night of May 30th–31st, three sets of similar rings.

I may add here that there are hundreds of ladies in Paris—

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even among the very wealthy—who have paste copies of their jewels, if only for safety's sake.

At Bellevue, I always had the real rings given me by my husband, and the *paste* ones. I wore the real ones at home and the paste ones when I went out for walks in the woods or on business.

Where were all these rings at the time of the crime? The three *real* rings (given me by M. B. and Félix Faure) were in the drawer of the wardrobe at my house in the Impasse Ronsin. The three *real* rings (given me by my husband) were at Vert-Logis. When I left Bellevue to come to Paris and fetch my mother at the station, I had put on the three *false* rings, leaving the three rings (given me by my husband) at Vert-Logis. When I massaged my mother I took those rings off, and took them upstairs when we retired. Those three false rings were therefore stolen by the murderers, together with the three *real* rings (given me by friends), the diamond crescent (the President's), a gold chain, and the tricolour brooch.

Fearing the consequences—to my daughter's future and to my reputation—which would follow the discovery that I had received jewels from "friends," I did not mention these, and when I gave the list of what had been stolen, I merely described the rings, without adding that I had possessed three sets of them.

The three rings given me by my husband, I intended to have altered, having some of the stones made up with new by M. Souloy, for Marthe, with whom, I may add, I had several times talked over the matter and discussed designs. For obvious reasons of elementary delicacy, I did not want to use for these presents to my daughter stones taken from the rings given me by "friends."

I also mentioned as having been stolen a "new art" ring (gold and pearl). That was on the morning of May 31st, when, surely after what I had gone through my thoughts would not be quite clear or my statements strictly accurate. I believed that I had worn that ring on the previous day, and that it had been stolen. I said so to M. Bouchotte, who made a note of it. Later, it suddenly occurred to me that I had

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left the "new art" ring at Bellevue, and that, consequently, it could not have been stolen. But I thought it was a matter of trifling importance, and I did not mention it. Then, at the d'Arlons, Doctor Acheray told me that the public seemed to suspect me! Here was a new dilemma. What was I to do? If I mentioned my mistake about the "new art" ring, people would say: "She alters her statements, she lies . . ." Fearing that such a simple declaration might lead to more investigations that would reveal certain chapters of my life which I was anxious should not be disclosed, and remembering also that this "new art" ring had been given me by an admirer, whose name would of course become known if I drew attention to that ring, I dared not mention it now. It was a sad mistake, and I paid a heavy penalty for it, just as it was a sad mistake not to state that I possessed duplicates of the three valuable rings.

When, however, I did say, not that I possessed another set of *real* rings, but that I had had the three rings in paste, and that these had been stolen—(which was absolutely true) the prosecution denied it. According to them, I had never had duplicates in paste of the three valuable rings given me by my husband. I gave the address of the firms where I had bought them and even the dates, but my statements in this matter were not even verified. And yet, it simply meant sending a detective to a jeweller in the Boulevard des Italiens, to another in the Boulevard des Capucines, and to a shop in the Rue de la Paix . . . that is, in the very heart of Paris. But the prosecution did not fail to send some one to Briançon, in the Alps (where my husband and I had been, as I have told, in 1897) in search of a merchant of alpenstocks, because an alpenstock with the name "Briançon" engraved on it had been found near the body of my husband on May 31st, 1908!

One more fact before leaving, for the present, this important "jewel problem." I had declared that a solid gold chain had been stolen, a "dull gold chain with large links." Now, M. Hamard had found, among other things in the secret recess behind the dresser, in the wall of the dining-room—a recess where I had myself told the police to look—"a chain,

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yellow metal." The Prosecution hoped to show that this chain was the one which I had said had been stolen. That would have been a material and unexceptional proof that I lied, a proof of my guilt!

On March 11th, 1909, I spent an hour explaining to the examining magistrate that I had possessed two chains, one that had been stolen and one that had been found in the recess. I lost patience . . . The expert appointed to assist the law was present, and held the chain. I said to him:

"Since you believe that the chain of yellow metal found in the recess is the same as the 'dull gold chain with large links' mentioned in the list of stolen jewels which I gave, kindly reply to these two questions: Firstly, has the chain which you are holding in your hands 'large links'?" . . .

"No," said the expert.

"Is it made of gold?"

"I could not tell."

I was almost beside myself with anger when I heard this reply. The expert had written a long report, but had not even troubled to ascertain whether the chain found by M. Hamard in the recess was made of "solid gold" or not.

M. Souloy, who was present, was sent to test the "yellow metal" on a touchstone. I need hardly say that the surprise of all—save myself—was extreme. If the chain were made of gold, then I was lost, and that, of course, was what the judge wanted . . . An hour elapsed. Then, M. Souloy returned.

"Well?" asked M. André, the judge.

"The chain is not made of gold. It is merely a gold-plated one."

The judge and the expert looked at one another in dismay, and my examination was proceeded with . . .

M. Leydet came to the d'Arlons a few days after I had been taken there. He was extremely pale. He seized my hand and said: "Hamard is coming . . . It is not the judge in charge of the Impasse Ronsin case who stands before you, but your old friend . . . It is dreadful. The whole population is against you . . . You must collect yourself, you must be calm . . . and help us to find the murderers."

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I was ill in bed and his words startled me. "Then," I said, "I must tell you everything—everything about the jewels, the papers . . . I must tell you about Félix Faure . . ."

"No, no . . ." said M. Leydet, "don't speak about that . . . We will find the murderers . . . but not a word about that . . ."

The door opened, and M. Hamard, head of the Criminal Investigation Department, came in. He had come to the Impasse Ronsin after the murder, but I did not know who he was at the time, so many people had been in my room then. I said to him as I had said to M. Leydet: "I must tell you about my past life, about the President . . ."

He, too, stopped me there, and said: "Don't speak about that . . . We know . . . We know . . . We promise to find the murderers . . . Have courage, we will find them . . ."

I felt immensely relieved. It was as if a huge weight had been lifted off my breast. I felt full confidence in these two men. I thought: They will find the murderers and they will not speak about the documents and the pearls, about my past life; and Marthe will not look down upon her mother . . . I felt that they knew everything. M. Leydet was a friend of M. B., the Attorney-General, and it seemed evident to me that M. Hamard, because of his office, knew all about the life of the late President . . .

M. Leydet said: "Let us lose no time. I must still tell you this: Engage a counsel—it is always wiser . . . Take my friend Aubin; he knows all about the case; he will be useful to you . . ." (I knew Maître Antony Aubin, and he had attended a few of my receptions.)

Thereupon a detective was ushered into the room. He wore a black gaberdine and a large hat with a turned-down brim. The man walked to and fro before me, and I was asked whether his attire was similar to that worn by the murderers. Then he put on a false beard, and again I was asked what remarks this performance suggested to me.

I said there was a great similarity between the detective's attire and that of the murderers, and gave various details about the gowns and hats of those murderers.

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After M. Leydet and M. Hamard had gone, my daughter told me that my friend Mme. Darracq (wife of the motor-car manufacturer) wished to see me. I received her, of course, and she said she had come to beg me take Maître Aubin as counsel. As M. Leydet had just told me the same thing, I said I would.

At the same time I was at a loss to understand why I needed a counsel!

"Oh," said Mme. Darracq, "it is the usual thing. It is for the 'civil' proceedings against the criminals. You need assistance, legal advice."

All this was quite new to me . . . Soon afterwards, Maître Aubin arrived, keen, full of life and fire and endowed with an amiable simplicity of character—as I was to find him all through my time of trouble. We had only a brief talk, for I felt very weak, and M. Aubin concluded: "Leydet is a very able magistrate; all will be well." And he added those words which I was to hear, week after week, for months and months: "We will find the murderers. Be patient . . . We will find them!"

I remained about a fortnight with Count and Countess d'Arlon. Journalists came to me. . . . Doctor Acheray, hearing that the *Matin* "demanded" an interview, and knowing the almost unlimited power of certain newspapers for good—or evil—hastily handed the *Matin* a letter which I had written to him on the day before the murder, in which I asked him to examine my mother before her departure for Bellevue. . . .

The letter duly appeared in the *Matin*, who, having thus received some exclusive information, had the generosity to publish a "favourable" article!

Ah! had my beloved father only been alive then! How he would have swept away this army of men who henceforth dogged my steps, hung pitilessly on my heels and hounded me down—and this not because they thought me guilty or innocent, not because they wished to assist me in finding the murderers—as they one and all proclaimed, in spoken and in written words (I possess all their letters in which I was naïve enough to believe)—but because I represented, in this age of sensation, that priceless asset, "good copy." They did not

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stop to think whether they were ruining me, sapping my health and my reason; it was nothing to them that by causing me for nearly two years what they called, with supreme jubilation, "The most talked of woman in the world," they inevitably paved the way for exaggerations and misrepresentations, and excited public opinion against me, for the world exaggerates what is bad rather than what is good, and scandal and murder have an exciting smack and flavour which noble qualities can never hope to possess. My intense love for my mother, the help I had given my husband in his work, the long weeks I had spent nursing him, the numberless services I had rendered not only to the needy and the poor, not only to my family and my husband's, but to friends, to important personages even, the difficulties I had surmounted by sheer will-power and devotion, the good side of my life, in short—all that was carefully ignored. Who wanted to hear about such trifles! . . . No, no, what every man and every woman wanted to find in the papers as soon as he or she got up in the morning and whilst enjoying their breakfast was, "What has *she* said? What has she done?" And the public had to be catered for according to its taste. Whether I had said or done nothing of the slightest importance did not matter. Nothing was without importance. The most common-place remark can be turned by a writer who knows his trade into a sensational, exclusive and lengthy article! . . . And when no journalist could approach me—well . . . they did not consider themselves beaten by such a trifle as that: they turned, twisted, triturated the statements I had made before—or was supposed to have made—until they could extract some fresh substance, some further sensation, to throw to their hungry readers.

The newspapers which showed themselves my worst and most unjust enemies did not do so at all times; that I readily admit. And there were a few, very few, journals who were impartial and fair to the end, among them the *Liberté* and the *Temps*. But what is one to think of a country where newspapers are allowed to make almost any statements, whether only partly true, or even not true at all, when *before and even during* a trial for murder they can, without being interfered

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with, deliberately rouse public opinion against the accused person; call him or her an assassin, discuss, analyse and comment, and make it difficult for a jury, who leaves the court after each sitting and go home and read the papers, to judge according to their conscience, however honest and clear-minded they may be!

During those days of unspeakable grief and pain, whilst I slowly recovered at the d'Arlons, my daughter was with me with her little friend Marguerite Buisson; and several friends came to see and console me, thank heaven!

The police came constantly. M. Pouce, one of the detectives, especially asked me details about the jewels. A list of the stolen ones had to be made, and I sent Marthe to the Impasse Ronsin to fetch all the jewel-cases and whatever jewelry she could find in the secret recess in the dining-room wall, so as to be able to make out the required list. I had already enumerated the stolen jewels on May 31st, but only approximately, of course.

On June 10th, Mariette came from Bellevue with a number of things which I needed, and she also brought a small box containing the three rings given me by my husband, a diamond crescent, and the "new art" ring. I wanted these jewels to be safe in my keeping, for otherwise Marthe might have found them, and knowing about the rings which I said had been stolen, she would have asked questions which it would have been difficult for me to answer without arousing her suspicions about one side of my past life.

Two days later (June 12th) I sent for M. Souloy, the jeweller whom in the old days I had entrusted with the work of making the talisman. I wanted the rings to be altered, not only, of course, because I wanted to give "new" jewels to my daughter, but chiefly now because having given the list of the jewels without, for reasons I have explained, stating that there were duplicates of them, it was indispensable that the rings just brought from Bellevue should be made unrecognisable.

I did not realise at the time the danger of such a move and the serious consequences it might—and did—entail. I had

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been told that public opinion was against me; I did not quite understand what it meant. It did not occur to me that people could believe I had strangled my mother and my husband. How could such a monstrous idea have come into my head! . . . My haunting thought was the love and esteem of my daughter, and, therefore, it was urgent that the jewels should be transformed.

Oh! I know that all the troubles which ensued, that all the complications and accusations about "the jewels" would have been avoided if only I had said on the morning after the crime: "They have stolen my mother's jewels—eleven in number." But no, I spoke the truth, never realising until afterwards how involved and even dangerous matters would become —I had spoken the truth. I said, after seeing the empty cases: "They stole my jewels. . . ." As I have explained, I did not know then that murder had been committed. I thought the men in black gowns and the red-haired woman had only come to steal; and it was no pleasant surprise to find that these had disappeared, besides my mother's eleven jewels, seven jewels of mine including three rings worth at least £60 each, and a splendid diamond crescent worth quite £400.

M. Souloy came. I was ill, so ill that the doctors kept giving me sea-water injections, but there was no time to lose. I handed M. Souloy the jewels that Mariette had brought from Bellevue, and instructed him to use the stones to make some rings for my daughter.

"I will, Madame," said M. Souloy. "Only, you understand that the alterations will be shown in my books."

"Why, of course," I replied. "When I am better, I intend going to my villa at Bellevue, and when the jewels are in their new form and ready, you can send them to me there."

I talked frequently with those around me about the mysterious tragedy. Some suggested that M. de Balincourt might possibly know who the culprits were; others told me that my valet probably knew a great deal more than I thought about the fatal night. I heard all kinds of arguments. . . . But I

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merely said: "If you have any proofs, if you are convinced of this one's or that one's participation in the crime, go and say so to the police. . . ." Would that I had always been so circumspect!

Pierre Buisson came every day, but was not allowed to see Marthe, and my poor child was bitterly grieved. . . . It was clear that the Buissons, however devoted to me, were annoyed by my increasing notoriety—and how could I blame them, although I certainly was not to blame for that notoriety—and thought it wise that the engagement between their son and my daughter should not be insisted upon until the murderers were arrested, and the "Impasse Ronsin Mystery" solved and forgotten.

This separation, though merely temporary, was a new source of grief to me; I had lost my mother whom I adored, my husband who had been a good friend for nearly twenty years and for whom Marthe had a profound affection, several newspapers were publishing articles on the "Murder Mystery" which were full of almost transparent accusations against me. . . . And now I had to watch my only child, my little Marthe, suffer in her love, that pure and charming romance of hers, which reminded me of my own short-lived engagement to Lieutenant Sheffer, in dear Beaucourt, when I was Marthe's age! . . .

I begged Dr. Acheray to take me to Bellevue. It seemed to me that there, in the country, away from Paris and alone with my daughter, I should suffer less. . . . He agreed, and in the middle of June, that is, a fortnight after the crime, I was taken in an ambulance to Vert-Logis. There I stayed with Marthe, a nurse, and Mariette Wolff, the old cook. At my request, two detectives lived and slept at Vert-Logis. I was frightened, not without good reason, and wanted to feel protected. Also, I wished those men to observe every one who came to see me. It might prove useful. . . .

Mariette loathed the police, and did not hesitate to say so. I myself did not like to have those men in the house, but I thought that Marthe and I were safer while they lived with us.

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Meanwhile, the house in the Impasse Ronsin was in the care of the *concierges*, and two detectives.

Every day, although I was far from well and still needed sea-water injections, the detectives at work on the mystery came to me for further information.

I did not feel happier at Bellevue. There can be no question of any degree of happiness when one lives through such days as those I went through at the time, but I certainly felt very hopeful, and I will now say why.

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CHAPTER XV

THE BLACK GOWNS

"An extraordinary event has taken place, a series of facts have been discovered, every one of them of such importance in the 'Impasse Ronsin Affair,' that the mystery is bound very soon to be cleared, and the three men in the black gowns and the red-haired woman you saw that night will be found and arrested. . . . We hold the clue of clues!"

These words were spoken to me at Bellevue on June 19th, 1908, three weeks after the crime, by one of the inspectors who almost daily called on me.

"What have you discovered, M. Pouce," I eagerly asked.

"I cannot, I must not tell you now. All I can say is that it is about the black gowns worn by the murderers. . . ."

"Have they been found? Have their owners been traced? . . ." I was frantic with excitement.

"Madame, I am not allowed to speak on the matter. But I can tell you this: Your troubles will soon cease and the murderers will be in our hands. . . . Don't ask me any more questions. I cannot answer them. And now will you kindly look at this photograph, and tell me if you see any one there who reminds you . . . of some one."

The photograph represented a group of three persons: two men and a woman. I seemed to recognise one of the men, a bearded person with sharp shaped features and keen eyes.

"There is a striking likeness," I said, "between this man and the red-bearded individual who on the night of May 30th–31st, stood near the door of the corridor, in the room, and who never spoke."

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M. Pouce showed his delight: "We are on the right track, madame," he said in tones of great satisfaction. "I thought that was one of the men." And once more he repeated: "We shall run the murderers down."

Inspector Pouce was mistaken and so was I—as I realised months afterwards—the bearded man of the photograph was not one of the murderers. He was Mr. Burlingham, an American journalist, and I will deal in another chapter with the story of this false scent.

It was several weeks after the day when Inspector Pouce showed me the photograph, that I learned all about the "extraordinary facts" which he had not been at liberty to reveal to me before, the facts which had made him assert that "the mystery would soon be unravelled."

When the reader has heard what those facts were he will not fail to admit that Inspector Pouce was right to call them "extraordinary"; they were indeed more than that; they were conclusive. Here they are:

On Sunday, May 31st, 1908, at about 10 P.M. a *contrôleur* of the Paris *Métropolitain* (Underground) called Villemant, picked up in a carriage of that railway two documents which had some connection the one with the other.

One was a visiting card bearing the name of Mme. Mazeline, on which were written the address of two wig-makers and of a *theatrical costumier called Guilbert*, and a card of invitation to the exhibition of M. Steinheil's paintings, in the Impasse Ronsin. The two were together on the floor of the compartment, and had undoubtedly been lost by the same individual.

M. Villemant also stated that the seat where he had found the two documents "had just been left by a young man, wearing a smock; that he appeared to be intoxicated, that he was playing with gold pieces, in his purse, and that the carriage was a 'first-class' one!"

Now, on May 30th, 1908, *six hours before the murder, three black gowns and a long black cloak similar in all ways to those worn by the three men and the red-haired woman, which I had fully described, were stolen from the "Hebrew Theatre" in Paris, and it was from the very M. Guilbert*

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whose name and address were scribbled on the card found in the Underground together with the invitation card to M. Steinheil's exhibition, that the three black gowns and the long black cloak had been hired by the "Hebrew Theatre!"

Why was I not told about all these important facts at once? Why did I only hear of them weeks and weeks after they had taken place? . . . That passes my understanding.

I grant that they could not be disclosed to the newspapers, for though the Press is often very useful to the police —in giving the description, for instance, or publishing the portrait of some wanted person—it must be admitted that the publication of a clue which can be followed to a successful issue only if the criminals are unaware of what is going forward, is likely to defeat the object of the police.

Why this sensational discovery of the theft of the gaberdines, a few hours before the murder, was not revealed to the newspapers, although many published attacks—veiled and indirect but none the less transparent—against me, such a revelation would of course have proved my absolute innocence beyond all doubt. It seems to me an unpardonable act of cruelty not to have informed me of this most essential development in the mystery of the Impasse Ronsin. It might have been necessary to swear me to secrecy, but was it not enough, in order to ensure my complete discretion, to tell me that the clue would lose all its value if I were in the least indiscreet! It might be objected that the conduct of the police was no business of mine. But my circumstances were unusual. Many newspapers were publishing articles which more or less roused public opinion against me. My narrative of the fatal night made thousands shrug their shoulders. It was "incredible" that men would disguise themselves in the manner I had described . . . I had "invented" this "fantastic account" . . . and so forth. Now, the discovery of the theft—a few hours before the crime—of three black gowns which tallied in every way with that which I had given of the costumes worn by the murderers, completely vindicated me. And if the police did not wish to inform the public of this startling fact, they ought at least to have informed

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me, if only to give me the courage to withstand the dreadful insinuations of certain journals; to bear with equanimity the ordeal of all those suspicions in which I felt myself more and more enveloped. For then I should have felt that the time would soon come when it would be no longer against the interests of the public to let the whole world know that I had spoken the truth, to acquaint the public with the discovery of the theft at the Hebrew Theatre, and thus to proclaim my innocence and put an end to all attacks and suspicions.

Of the two cards so miraculously found by the Underground *contrôleur* and handed by him to the police, one, as I have stated, was a card of invitation to my husband's exhibition, and the other bore the name of a certain Mme. Mazeline, and the addresses of two wig-makers and that of M. Guilbert, a theatrical costumier.

Mme. Mazeline, a painter of repute, was then sixty-two, I had known her well in the days of President Faure. She had resided many years at Le Hâvre, Félix Faure's birthplace, and had been on terms of friendship with Félix Faure and his family. She had begun painting a portrait of the President in his studio at the Elysée, shortly before his death and had to complete the portrait from memory. The portrait was shown at the Salon.

Mme. Mazeline and I have never met since the death of the President.

Questioned about her card found in a carriage on the Underground, she suggested that it might possibly be a card which many years before she had given to some model, man or woman, who had kept it to use it as a means of introduction to other artists. (She had written her address on the card herself, in pencil.)

The other addresses on the card were those of the two wig-makers and that of M. Guilbert. The investigations at the wig-makers yielded no result. But when the inspector called on M. Guilbert his researches were rewarded.

I had described the mysterious men and the woman first

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on the morning of May 31st, 1908, a few hours after they had left my house—on June 1st and again June 5th, when a detective wearing a black gown and hat was paraded before me at Count d'Arlons, and I had described their attire as follows: "The three men wore long black gowns, and the woman wore a man's cloak, long and dark. The long black gowns with their flat, tight sleeves reminded me of the *soutanes* worn by Catholic priests; the hats were felt hats with high crowns." As regards these hats—and the reader, a little later, will realise the importance of the statement I made—the report of the *Sûreté* (Criminal Investigation Department) drawn up on June 5th, contained this:

"*Concerning the hats, it is useful to recall that, on Monday, June 1st, when Mme. Steinheil gave a description of the individuals whom she saw on the night of May 30th–31st, she specified that the men did not wear hats such as those usually worn by priests, but hats of black felt, the brims of which, bent down, had appeared to her as wide and the crowns higher and more pointed than the hats of ecclesiastics.*"

And now that my description of the gowns and hats worn by the murderers stands quite clearly before the reader's eyes, let us follow Inspector Pouce to M. Guilbert, the costumier on the Boulevard St. Martin, where he had gone in the hope of discovering a connection between the card and the murder.

The Inspector found Mlle. Rallet, one of M. Guilbert's assistants.

What did Mlle. Rallet—to whose accurate book keeping and absolute reliability, her employer paid a glowing tribute—have to say?

I can do no better than quote the evidence she gave, not only to the Inspector, but to M. Hamard himself.

"This Wednesday, June 10, 1908, we, Gustave Hamard, Knight of the Legion of Honour, head of the Criminal Investigation Department, continuing our investigations, have heard, on oath, Mlle. Georgette Rallet . . . who has declared:

'I have been employed since September 1907 by M. Guil-

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bert . . . My duties are to receive customers and to record the despatch and return of all goods. It goes without saying that I examine the goods when they are returned as well as when they leave our premises. Our customers are chiefly actors and actresses, and among them there is a Russian society, which has its headquarters at the Eden Theatre (or Hebrew Theatre), 133 Rue Saint Denis. The orders of the society are given by M. Goldstein and Feinberg, who are usually accompanied by Mlle. Jankel . . .

'The last time M. Goldstein, M. Feinberg, and Mlle. Jankel called was on Wednesday, May 27th, the day before Ascension Day. They arrived between 3 and 4 P.M. It was Goldstein who addressed me, as usual, for Feinberg only speaks German, Russian, and English. He ordered, for a play entitled *Le Vice-Roi* which was to be performed the following day, a few Roman and Spanish costumes, and two gowns for priests.

'Between 7 and 8 P.M. the messenger delivered the costumes . . . I generally send, on the day after the performance, for the costumes we have lent, but on May 29th I was too busy to do so. Besides, I intended to have the costumes fetched back on the Monday, June 1st, together with others which had been hired for the performance of Sunday, May 31st. For M. Goldstein after giving his order for the *Vice-Roi*, which was to be performed on the following day, had ordered four costumes for Jewish priests for a play entitled *Cain and Abel*, which would be performed on Sunday, May 31st.

'Now, on Saturday, May 30th, at 5.30 P.M., the messenger only took to the Eden Theatre three gowns for Jewish priests, for Goldstein had already received two previously . . .

'To sum up, on the evening of May 30th, the Eden Theatre had received from us—by two deliveries—five black gowns, including another black gown specially ordered by an actor, the other five being for supers. I must add that on May 30th, at 4 P.M., Mlle. Jankel and an actor called Hamburger came to order a black *soutane* and a black *redingote* which were needed for the performance on that very evening . . . After

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five applications, I managed on the following Wednesday to have returned to me, not all the costumes we had let, but only three of the gowns, the *soutane* and the *redingote*.

'There remains, therefore, in the hands of the Russian Society, three black gowns belonging to us . . .'

Signed GEORGETTE RALLET.
O. HAMARD."

(Extract from *Dossier*, Cote 662.)

Later, Mlle. Rallet gave further details to M. Hamard.

". . . M. Goldstein, M. Feinberg, and Mlle. Jankel, on May 27th, tried on a few of the costumes just ordered . . .

"There were twenty-seven parcels . . . The costumes in those parcels had been handed to me for checking before being packed, by M. Guilbert and Riegel, a clerk . . .. Fremat, the messenger, placed the parcels in two large baskets. In *another basket*, he placed the thirteen hats which completed some of the costumes. After having filled the baskets and secured them with rope, Fremat hired a barrow . . . loaded up, and left the shop at about 8 P.M.

"On May 30th, M. Guilbert and Riegel packed eighteen costumes ordered for the performance of May 31st. I checked the costumes which were spread before me on the counter . . .

"On the following Wednesday, June 3rd, Fremat recovered possession of the costumes ordered on the 27th. When I counted them, in the afternoon, I found that *four were missing: the large black cloak and three costumes of Jewish priests* . . ."

(Quoted from *Dossier*, Cote 669.)

The Inspector, having discovered that three black gowns and a black cloak had been let out by M. Guilbert to the Hebrew Theatre and not returned to him, went, of course, straight to that theatre. I can imagine the Inspector's feelings, and his thoughts. Would he find the missing garments there? Had they merely been mislaid? Or had they been *stolen!* And *when?* If they had been stolen on the 30th, a

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few hours before the double murder, then, as he had said, he held the clue of clues!

What did he hear at the theatre?—That the three black gowns and the black cloak had been *stolen*.

Here again, I can do no better than quote from the *Dossier*, the evidence given either to M. Hamard, Chief of the *Sûreté*, or to M. André, the examining magistrate in charge of my case, *after* I had been arrested.

After confirming on every point the statements made by Mme. Rallet, M. Goldstein stated, among other facts:

"None of the artists were told off to check the deliveries of costumes made by the firm Guilbert, and the messenger was in the habit of placing the baskets of costumes in the vestibule, near the box-office of the Hebrew Theatre. Any one could easily make his way into the theatre, for the door, opening inwards, had only to be pushed, and is never closed . . .

"For the performance of May 28th, all the costumes were there . . . But things were different on May 31st. On that day at about 7 P.M., I opened the basket which had been put down in the vestibule the day before, by the messenger from Guilbert's. *The ropes of the basket were undone.* I also found at once that, contrary to custom, *the costumes were in disorder.* Feinberg, who was standing near me, told me that he had noticed the same thing on the previous evening (May 30th) . . . At the moment when every one had to put on his costume, we found that *the gowns of the Jewish priests were missing* . . . M. Feinberg sent Gabriel, the watchman of the theatre, to Guilbert's. But the shop was closed . . .

". . . In spite of all our searches, throughout the theatre, it has been impossible to trace the four missing costumes . . ."

(*Dossier*, Cote 677.)

And M. Goldstein added, on another occasion, when asked for further details:

". . . The baskets were undone, and the lids were 'free.' The baskets delivered by Guilbert's were always fastened with rope . . ."

(*Dossier*, Cote 688.)

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Finally, on March 2nd, 1909, M. Goldstein, once more interrogated, said among other things:

". . . Feinberg told me that on Saturday, May 30th, at 6.30 P. M., when he looked for the various parts of the Hamlet costume, which he was to wear at the matinee performance the next day, in the play *Queen Isabella* and which he thought he would find in the basket, he had found what he wanted, but had noticed that the basket was undone and that the contents were overturned and in great disorder.

"It would be quite easy for any one to steal the gowns since the basket was left in the corridor of the theatre at a time when we were all in the *café*, and since the door had only to be pushed . . ."

(*Dossier*, Cote 724.)

M. Feinberg corroborated all these statements; but the exact words he used concerning the state of the basket from which the three black gowns undoubtedly worn by the three murderers, and the long black cloak undoubtedly worn by the red-haired woman, were stolen a few hours before the crime, are worth quoting:

"I found that the contents of the basket were in disorder; the parcels, which are usually packed with the greatest care by M. Guilbert's, were undone and the various parts of the costumes were all mixed together. On May 31st we were unable to find the three Jewish priests' gowns and the garment which Guilbert's call a Russian cloak, and which we call a 'Pastor costume.'"

(*Dossier*, Cote 676.)

The three gowns and the dark cloak were never found again. And Mlle. Rallet, basing her claim *on the entries in her books*, sent a registered letter (on June 9th, 1908) demanding the return of those garments or the payment of a sum of money—which she duly quoted—representing their value.

Thus three black gowns and one black cloak had really been stolen in the corridor of the Hebrew Theatre on May 30th, 1908. And the times when those costumes were stolen is easy

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to calculate. The basket which contained them was delivered at 6 P. M. M. Feinberg found it "undone and in great disorder" at 8.30 P. M. There had been no one present when the messenger had put down the basket. There had been no one in the corridor of the theatre between 6 and 8.30 P. M.—the whole staff was "at the *café*," chatting, or dining . . . And the door needed only to be pushed!

Does it require a great stretch of imagination—not to believe in the theft, for it is impossible not to believe in it—to admit that the gowns worn by the four persons whom I saw in my room on the fatal night were the identical ones that had been stolen from the Hebrew Theatre?

If coincidence be called upon to explain things, let the sceptics turn to my description of the appearance of those persons—the criminals.

Let us suppose I had said, for instance, that the gowns had collars or that the sleeves were wide and loose . . . Then my description would not have exactly tallied with that of the stolen gowns. But no; I did not mention collars. I *did* say that the sleeves were tight-fitting, and in every detail my description corresponded to that which M. Guilbert himself would have given of the gown and the cloak he sent to the Hebrew Theatre for the performance of May 31st. Better than that, when Mlle. Rallet, on December 26th, 1908, was once more asked to describe the stolen gown, she declared—as I had done in the case of the gowns worn by the murderers—that those supplied by her firm had "flat and tight sleeves"!

If I had invented the amazing scene, I might have said that there were four men in black gowns, but no. I declared that there had been three men in black gowns and one woman in a dark cloak. And three gowns and one cloak had been stolen!

I will go even further to meet the doubts and questions of the sceptic.

Had I invented this "tale," as M. André called it, how could I have imagined that the three men wearing black ecclesiastical gowns, had *not* worn black ecclesiastical hats? Surely coincidences have limits. I said that the men wore

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"felt hats with high, pointed crowns"—not ecclesiastical hats. And the ecclesiastical hats which belonged to the stolen gowns were found in their separate baskets—a small basket; and M. Goldstein declared: "We generally put the hats aside; we hide them so as to prevent the performers from choosing among them just as they please."

There can be no longer any question of coincidence. There cannot exist one single human being endowed with the most ordinary amount of common sense who could or would deny, after the fact which I have quoted from evidence given to the head of the *Sûreté* and to the magistrate in charge of my case, that suspicions or attacks against me should not have been allowed to go on, and that it was quite unpardonable to dare accuse me of having murdered my husband and my mother.

Among the thousand and one anonymous letters I received later on, there was one written by some one who had realised the whole importance of the stolen gowns as a proof of my complete innocence. But in his—or her—desire to prove to me that I was a murderess, the anonymous writer explained: "You stole the gowns yourself or had them stolen by some one!" The prosecution possibly thought the same, but never expressed the thought, for its absurdity was, of course, obvious.

The prosecution, however, wanted to find me guilty even on the fact of such an overwhelming proof of my innocence.

Will the reader now hear how the prosecution dealt with this *affaire des lévites*, as it was called? Here are the very words used in the indictment on this matter:

"*A strange circumstance* revealed by the witness Villemant *had made it possible to believe for one moment that the narrative of the 'accused' concerning the men in the black gowns could have some character of likelihood . . .*"

After a rapid survey of the evidence given by M. Villemant, Mme. Mazeline, and M. Guilbert . . . the indictment says:

"The evidence thus gathered seemed likely to throw some doubt on the judicial *instruction*, and to lend some truth to Mme. Steinheil's narrative. But . . . firstly, it is certain that the disappearance of the ecclesiastical gowns was only noticed

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on the evening of May 31st—that is, several hours after the crime. Secondly, the ecclesiastical hats were never lost and have been found. Now, Mme. Steinheil has stated that the criminals wore hats which harmonised with their costumes . . . It is, therefore, necessary to wave aside that fable and to note an unimportant coincidence between the thefts of the gowns and the crime of May 31st . . ."

Could anything be more revolting in its absolute lack of good faith! For surely the prosecution had read the evidence of the various witnesses and was bound to know, firstly, that the black gowns were stolen, *not after* the crime, *but before* the crime, on May 30th, as the evidence of M. Feinberg and Goldstein established beyond discussion; secondly, that the report of the Criminal Investigation Department itself, dated June 5th, 1908, contained this sentence, which I have already quoted:

"Concerning the hats, it is useful to recall that on Monday, June 1st, when Mme. Steinheil gave a description of the individuals whom she saw on the night of May 30th–31st, she specified that:

" 'The men did not wear hats such as those usually worn by priests, but hats of black felt, the brims of which, bent down, had appeared to her as wide and the crowns higher and more pointed than the hats of ecclesiastics.' "

(*Dossier*, Cote 914.)

In spite of the prosecution and its wilful blindness to all the proofs of my innocence, the jury of the Paris Assize Court, in November 1909, after I had spent a whole year in prison, saw the truth and acquitted me.

In my heart I have often blessed the honest and zealous Underground *employé* who handed the cards he had found to the police. There can be no doubt that the "stolen black gowns" helped the jurors to understand that I had spoken the truth, and could not have murdered my husband and my mother. And I have often blessed the memory of my father, too. For had he not taught me to observe and see at a glance the main lines, the striking or essential parts of a person or

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object? And how without that training of the eye and mind could I have noticed and remembered on that night of terror the principal points of the murderers' attire?

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CHAPTER XVI

INVESTIGATIONS

A curious thing happened while I was at Bellevue. I received from my notary, who had received it from the judicial authorities, a package which contained a number of things found at my house: a few letters from President Faure, some letters from M. B., and the President's talisman! If these objects are returned to me, I thought, it is evidently because it is not desired that anything concerning the late President of the Republic and the Attorney-General be brought up in the "Affair of the Impasse Ronsin." This impression was right, as will be fully realised later on. Every phase of my past life, from my earliest years to the date of the mysterious murder, was investigated, *except* my relations with magistrates and with President Faure.

The circle of my friends was daily growing smaller, which was perhaps only human, since I was in trouble. I still received many letters from friends and acquaintances, but they were every day fewer in number. And their tone grew less sympathetic, their style more formal . . . Soon no letters reached me at all. No one seemed to remember me, not even the few friends in whom I had absolute confidence, and I painfully repeated to myself a saying of my mother's: "A friend who ceases to be a friend never was a friend."

Letters, however, kept pouring into the letter-box of Vert-Logis. But they were all anonymous letters, a few threatening me or calling me a criminal, the others denouncing as the authors of the double-murder, my cook, Mariette, her son, Alexandre Wolff, my valet, Rémy Couillard and others. The

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letters gave me all kinds of "information" about their past life and doings, suggested theories of the crime that were so crowded with details that one might have thought the writers had been present when it was committed. I burnt them all, except a few, which, when I was not too ill, I read and re-read, with an interest that became almost morbid . . . They haunted me, some of those letters, and I lived in an atmosphere of suspicion that was painful and distractful.

Couillard was at Bellevue. Naturally enough he had not wanted to remain at the house in the Impasse Ronsin. He was nervous, trembling, frightened of everybody and everything, and was a pitiful object to look at . . . I pitied him . . . and I pitied myself.

Marthe was with me, and her presence, her solicitude, her love, enabled me to bear my cross. At the same time, I remembered the Inspector's startling promises, and the words spoken both by M. Leydet and M. Hamard: "Be patient . . . we will find them . . ."

Doctor Regal—appointed by the authorities—came on June 26th with Inspector Pouce to see if I were strong enough to bear the journey from Bellevue to Boulogne (on the Seine). It appeared that M. Leydet was compelled, on account of the public feeling against me, to ask me further questions, in the presence this time of M. Grandjean, *substitut* of the *Procureur de la République*. The new examination would take place at the house of M. Brouard, the husband of M. Steinheil's sister Marguerite, whom the reader perhaps remembers as the lady who received me in Paris, when I returned from my wedding-trip.

I was only too anxious to assist the law in its investigations, and I consented to go to Boulogne—where I was to be kept from 1 P. M. till late in the evening! The nurse, who had accompanied us, of course, had to give me occasional doses of ether to enable me to breathe, and to reply to the questions I was asked. Marthe and M. Boeswilwald were in the next room, for serious fears were entertained that I might utterly collapse. I spent several long hours lying full length on a stretcher placed on the floor. The nurse remained near me.

I was asked the most fantastic questions by M. Leydet and

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M. Grandjean . . . But here again I will quote from the *dossier* the questions and my answers.

I pass over the questions about the gate and the doors of the Impasse Ronsin, the story of the key lost by Couillard, and of the return of the dog he had borrowed, the story of my husband's revolver which Couillard did not hand back to M. Steinheil, and which was found in his apron, and of our delayed departure for Boulogne on account of my mother's ill-health . . . These points have already been dealt with. I had nothing to add to my first statements. But here are some new questions, and my replies.

Question. "According to what you told us on the morning after the crime, the criminals appearing suddenly before you, in the middle of the night, in your daughter's room, which you were occupying, took you for your daughter. There is no doubt that you were then in a room which was evidently that of a young girl, and that you were in your daughter's bed, but we cannot conceal from you that the criminals' mistake is open to scepticism."

Answer. "I can only repeat the words that were spoken to me and which implied that mistake. I may add that my face was in repose, that my hair was loose, and merely held by a ribbon of blue satin, and was spread around my head. I wore no jewels, no rings, no wedding-ring. All these were left in the dressing-room—and were stolen. I wore a plain night-dress of pale blue *linon*. It has frequently happened in society that I was taken for my daughter's elder sister. Believe me, there is no question of coquetry in this. If I tell you all this, it is merely because you ask me to reply to those who are sceptical. I am slender, I lost much weight last winter, about thirty pounds, during my illness—gastro-enteritis. Although the criminals had two dark-lanterns, the scene lasted so short a time that they certainly had not much time to examine me carefully. Everything took place with fantastic rapidity . . ."

Question. "Whatever the acts of violence you had to suffer that night (blows, gags, and ropes round neck, hands and feet) it may appear possible that the criminals spared your life. This has given rise to various rumours. It seems difficult to

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admit that the criminals allowed a young lady—or rather the person whom they took for a seventeen-year-old young lady—that is, a most dangerous witness, to survive. Unless the chief of the gang yielded to a feeling of pity, which, by the way, is sometimes met with among hardened criminals, then another explanation must be found. Here is one which has been suggested—and it compels me to ask you a 'delicate' question. Suppose that in a moment of weakness you had relations with a man of doubtful morality, who, at some time might be capable of burglary and 'plunder and violence,' in order to obtain money. Suppose that man entering at night into your house, finding it inhabited contrary to his expectations; suppose that man, suddenly finding himself in your presence and, as far as you are concerned, not daring to go as far as murder, because of 'the past'—would you not have hesitated to denounce him?"

Answer. "I swear to you by all that I hold most sacred, on my poor dead mother and husband, on the head of my little Marthe, that I never had the 'weakness' you refer to in your most painful question. Even though I had been deceived by appearances, I should not hesitate, however painful it might be, to denounce the man."

Question. "The cord—three metres in length—with which your husband was strangled has been compared with and found similar to a ball of cord which was found in a basket in the cupboard of the pantry. Have you any interesting remarks to make on that matter?"

Answer. "All I can say is that the ball you mention was blind-cord and was used for various purposes in the house. Some was used at the time of the exhibition of paintings which took place in the 'winter garden.' I have no recollection of any piece of cord that might have been left somewhere in the rooms."

(*Dossier*, Cote 79.)

This *Cote* 79 contained only sixteen foolscap pages, and they represent the gist of an examination which lasted several hours! There were frequent interruptions, when I felt so

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ill that the woman had to come and give me ether . . . Part of the examination was what I can only call conversation. I did my best to call the attention of M. Leydet to M. de Balincourt, to the "mysterious German," to the various men who had come into my husband's life during the weeks immediately preceding the crime.

I remember the judge telling me: "You don't mention Couillard. It looks as if you were protecting him . . ." And I replied: "Some tell me Couillard 'must know something,' others assert that he is absolutely innocent . . . I have nothing to say. Let the law make investigations, discover the truth and arrest the murderers . . ."

I was greatly surprised when Couillard was sent for. I admit the anonymous letters had had some influence on me, and that I had certain suspicions against Couillard, but of late they had vanished. I thought only of the "clue of clues," of the man whose photographs had been shown me (Mr. Burlingham).

When I returned to Bellevue it was very late. Couillard had left for Boulogne. He returned at 1.30 A.M.

During the following days the detectives came just as often as before. They did not seem, however, to make much progress in the "case."

Mariette was still with me, and was as devoted as ever, to say the least. Her son, Alexandre, a horse-dealer, whom I had known when he was a mere lad, came twice to Bellevue. He was better dressed than usual and seemed to roll in money. I mention the two details because they were also mentioned in the anonymous letters I received, and because, five months later, and in circumstances which I will fully describe, I accused Alexandre Wolff.

As for Couillard, I no longer required his services now that my life was so completely changed, and I sent him to a motor-car garage to learn to be a chauffeur.

M. Souloy brought me the altered jewels. I gave one of the "new" rings (sapphire and diamonds) to Marthe, and kept the others.

The Inspector continued his assurances that they would soon arrest the murderers. They had fresh clues, they were

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on the right track . . . All would soon be well . . . But nothing happened, and I hoped and waited in vain . . .

Towards the end of July I felt a little stronger and could walk about. I asked a doctor to allow me to go to Normandy with Marthe. He said a change would do me much good. I left Bellevue and went to stay at Louvières (Calvados) with some friends who ran their own farm. Their daughter was an intimate friend of Marthe, who was, of course, with me. For a whole month we led the simple life. There were no detectives around me. I avoided reading the newspapers. The country people, who knew who I was, were kind and sympathetic, and Marthe and I breathed again. It was as if we were at last allowed to live, to be like all other human beings, and we blessed those good friends who had invited us to spend a few weeks with them in happy and beautiful Normandy.

After a time, however, when the meadows seemed less green, the sky less blue and the air less exhilarating than during the first days after our arrival at Louvières, the nightmare once more beset me . . . Once more I thought of the night of terror, of the murderers . . . who were at large. I wanted to avenge the dead, and I wanted to put an end once and for all to all the dreadful suspicions against me which had sprung up everywhere because . . . the murderers had spared me. My impardonable sin was to be alive! If I was not a murderess, why did I not prove it? . . . That is what I had heard, and read, alas! . . .

And I wondered, wondered, wondered what the police were doing! I received letters in which I was told that the *Affaire of the Impasse Ronsin* was being "*classée*," that is put aside, abandoned, give up . . . And at the same time I heard public opinion was still against me. One letter written in vulgar slang and forwarded from Paris, said "You are the assassin; only, as you are highly connected (*comme vous connaissez des gens de la haute*) the police are not doing what they would do in the case of any poor wretch . . . You coward, you have gone and hidden yourself in the country! . . ." Even the two or three "former" friends who occasionally wrote to me, gave me to understand that the

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pleasant relations, the friendship of the old days, would be impossible "until the murderers had been arrested." As if I knew where they were! As if I had only to call them or point to them and have them arrested! As if I were not more anxious than any one on earth to know who were the murderers of my husband and my mother! . . .

There are mental pains which are almost unbearable, and none greater perhaps than to see the being one loves best in all the world suffer near you. . . . Marthe, brave little girl that she was, tried to smile so as to give me courage to live. We spent long hours, under a tree or in the fields . . . in silence. I watched her, so worn, so pale, her pallor heightened by her mourning dress, her head bent down, her eyes filled with tears which she dared not shed. She knew my thoughts, and I knew hers. Her mind was in Paris. . . . She thought of her father, of her grandmother . . . and of Pierre, her *fiancé*, her lover, who no longer wrote . . . who would never write to her again, until the murderers were arrested. Not that he believed I was guilty, but probably because, like his parents, he dreaded Public Opinion. . . .

And as I turned and turned these thoughts over in my distracted mind, I grew more and more resolute. . . . Public Opinion, indeed! Well, I would face it! I would go to the bitter end—and the end was bitter, my God!—I would look for those assassins, who after making two victims were now claiming two more, my child and myself, I would hunt them down, and if the Law were reluctant or disheartened, if the Law refused to go on with the search, I would force the Law to do its duty. . . .

A letter came, at that moment, a letter from M. Marcel Hutin, a journalist on the staff of the *Echo de Paris* and the friend of a friend of mine. He told me that most people were still against me, and that he had placed himself entirely at my disposal.

I wrote a long letter to Maître Antony Aubin, entreating him to reproach the authorities for their apathy. . . .

A little pacified, I tried to forget my trial, and, knowing that the best antidote to haunting thoughts and fixed ideas

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is work, I started with Marthe's assistance to decorate the whole house of our host and hostess. . . . We painted ornaments, huge decorative flowers, altered the appearance of the rooms, and even improved the gardens. . . .

Sometimes we went to the seaside, or made an excursion to some beauty spot in Normandy. Once again I began to "forget." This country life was beautiful and simple. I thought of Beaucourt, and, as I watched Marthe, I said to myself: "How my father would have loved her!" The sorrow written in such pathetic lines on her sweet face—so young and fresh that it should not as yet have shown care or pain—made me ashamed to think of my own overwhelming grief. Seeing that the simple healthy life we led did us much good, our friends suggested that we should take half their house, and settle down permanently in Normandy. . . .

But Marthe shook her little head. She longed to return to Paris, to see Pierre at all costs, to hear his voice. . . . And I was more than anxious to go on with the Impasse Ronsin affair—to press inquiries, to trace the murderers, to solve that mystery which was ruining my child's happiness, and which made me the most miserable and most unjustly abused creature in the world. . . .

With all my heart I thanked our friends. Our stay with them if it had not cured our minds, had strengthened our bodies, and Marthe and I had both known many an hour of comforting peace.

At the end of August we left Louvières and returned to Bellevue. We would not go to the Impasse Ronsin yet, for the house was in the hands of the builders, who were dividing it, so that I could let a part of it, as well as the vast studio.

M. and Mme. Buisson came to Vert-Logis, but not often, and Marthe saw her Pierre. . . .

The visits of Inspectors began again. It was chiefly Inspector Pouce who came to see me. I had been keenly interested in the "Burlingham" clue, and I asked what had been discovered during the month I had been away. The Inspector replied that all was well, that matters were very hopeful . . . and it was then that the all-important facts of

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the two cards in the Underground, and of the stolen gowns, were revealed to me.

The "Burlingham" clue had been arrived at in this way:

On May 27th, when M. Goldstein, M. Feinberg and Mlle. Jankel had called at Guilbert's to order a number of costumes for the Hebrew Theatre, there had been present in the shop some fifteen to twenty persons, among whom was Mr. Burlingham with some of his friends. It was M. Goldstein and Mlle. Jankel who said this. I may add that M. Goldstein also said that he believed that later he had seen Burlingham leaving the Underground, at the *Gare du Nord*, and that he had followed the red-bearded man early in June, but had lost sight of him. "The man carried a football bag," M. Goldstein added.

The Inspector procured a photograph which represented Mr. Burlingham, a friend of his, and a woman. He showed it to me at Bellevue on June 19th, and I remarked that the bearded man in that photograph looked very much like the red-bearded man I had seen on the night of the crime.

The Inspector gave me many curious details about Mr. Burlingham and his friends: they mixed with all kinds of strange people, they walked about wearing sandals, and used long sticks very much like the alpenstock found near my husband's body!

The apparently very interesting Burlingham clue had no value whatever.

I hasten to add that it was afterwards established beyond a shadow of doubt that at the time of the crime Mr. Burlingham, who had left Paris on May 22nd on a tramp to Switzerland with a friend, was at Montbard, in Burgundy, a small city which he left for Dijon the next morning.

But this entirely convincing alibi had not been established when Inspector Pouce—who, I really admit, did his utmost in this case and spared no effort to trace the murderers—explained to me the importance of the Burlingham clue.

I did not start these investigations about Mr. Burlingham. I was shown a photograph in which he appeared, and I merely said: "This bearded man looks very much like the red-

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bearded man I saw on the fatal night!" I was told that the clue was a conclusive one, and I was, naturally enough, inclined to believe it.

At the *Sûreté* when the photograph of Mr. Burlingham was shown to me once more, and I was asked: "Is that the man?" I replied (I quote the very words I used): "If my assertion alone was to bring about the arrest of the man whose photograph you are showing me, and whom otherwise I don't know, I would certainly never dare make such an assertion. . . . But I am very much struck by the likeness."

I was asked to disguise myself, and to accompany the detectives, who would show me Mr. Burlingham without my being recognised by him. Once I wrapped myself in an ample cloak; another time I had to put on a short skirt that considerably changed my appearance. We followed Mr. Burlingham on foot and in a carriage. . . .

We went several times to Paris for the purpose of my identifying him. I remember seeing him leaving his house near the Gare Montparnasse, I believe, and I found that he was very like the red-bearded man I had seen on the night of the double murder "near the door, frightened and dumb." On another occasion we saw him, from our carriage, in front of the School of Fine Arts. At that time I still had my full reason and was incapable of accusing any one without absolute proofs of their guilt. . . .

But my mind was at work.

Mr. Burlingham was "shown" to me again. . . . Later, the *Matin* arranged that I should see him at their offices in the Boulevard Poissonnière. . . . Through a door left slightly open for the purpose I saw the "red-bearded" man. I "recognised" him, but not absolutely.

Then, once more, I was called to the *Sûreté*, and there, after so many meetings with the red-bearded man, I said that I unhesitatingly recognised him as one of the men I had seen on the fatal night. . . . Is it really very much to be wondered at that I did . . . ?

The most wonderful thing about this, as my able counsel Maître Antony Aubin exclaimed at my trial, "is not that

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Mme. Steinheil *then* 'recognised' Mr. Burlingham, but that she did not 'recognise' him before."

I returned to Bellevue. The inspectors and detectives all told me: "Be brave! We are nearing the goal!" And I believed them. We are always so ready to believe what we long for.

Whilst firmly believing in the Burlingham clue, I was utterly bewildered by the contents of the anonymous letters I received. Most of them mentioned Couillard, Mariette, and Wolff. A few denounced M. de Balincourt, and, I need hardly add, several denounced . . . me. A large proportion of these letters were actually brought by hand to Bellevue and dropped, probably by the writers themselves, into my letter-box. The average number was twelve to fifteen a day. . . . In Paris, a few weeks later, the number rose to thirty or forty.

I read every one of these letters. In any one of them I might find a clue, a useful suggestion, perhaps the whole truth, and I could not afford to neglect this correspondence, disheartening though it was. . . .

Day after day the detectives came and told me of what was going on. Journalists called . . . and each had his theory, which he propounded with the confidence and eloquence of those who deal in theories only. Had I listened to everybody I should have denounced at least one hundred persons as being the murderers! The majority mentioned Couillard and Wolff, and as the days went by these two names became more and more deeply engraven on my mind. Alas! all these suggestions were, a few weeks later, to hypnotise me to such an extent that, without more proofs than mere circumstantial evidence, and the denunciations anonymous writers afforded, I accused first Couillard and then Wolff of being the criminal.

Mme. Buisson rarely came to Bellevue now. Pierre came to see Marthe, secretly, from time to time, and held a pistol to my head when he told me in his usual weak, timid and despondent manner, that the murderers would have to be found, or else it would be impossible for him to marry Marthe! An extraordinary dilemma! . . . This absurd condition revolted

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my daughter so much that her love for Pierre received a decisive blow, and, burying her head against my breast she cried: "Is that real love?" and burst into sobs.

Meanwhile, the inspectors were at war with each other, as most inspectors are, or so I have since been told. Each had *his* clue, and derided the clues of his colleagues. But what was worse than that, some were for, and some against me!

One morning, an able investigator who knew exactly what was going on at the *Sûreté*, and in whom I had the greatest confidence, entered the room at Vert-Logis, where I was sitting with Marthe by my side. He was as white as a sheet. . . . "Madame," he stammered, "I don't know what underlies this affair, but it seems quite hopeless, things are at an absolute standstill. . . . The Burlingham clue is given up. It has been established that Mr. Burlingham was far away from Paris at the time of the murder. The 'stolen gowns' remains, of course, as undeniable proof of your innocence, and I still believe that some day the murderers may be arrested, but the case is all over so far as the *Sûreté* is concerned . . . Ah! If only the 'stolen gowns' clue had been fully investigated *at once!* . . . It is so obvious that it provided the only way to the solution of the mystery. . . . The Impasse Ronsin murder case is *classé!*"

I had more than once complained of the apparent lack of activity and zeal on the part of the authorities, but I could not believe that it had been decided to abandon the whole affair . . . I was amazed and pained . . . Naturally, I asked the reason for this sudden breaking off of the investigations. No doubt my imagination erred, but in these pages I describe all my thoughts, and it seemed to me that in some way it had been discovered that the main object of the criminals was to get possession of the documents. Perhaps only one of the three men in the black gowns knew about them, and he had let the others steal the money and the jewels . . . That one of the men had known of the documents could not be doubted, for he had demanded them, and I believe that the authorities having at last somehow discovered that there was what one

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may call a political side to the Impasse Ronsin mystery, were not anxious to go on with the investigations, which, if the whole affair was unravelled, might eventually prove a source of much unpleasantness and embarrassment to certain officials . . . Or perhaps—for I went as far as that in my eagerness to solve the problem—the authorities knew all the time the secret of the strange affair, and had made some inquiries, reluctantly, and only for the sake of appearances . . . But now, they had had enough and they wished to drop the matter altogether . . . A rather wild surmise . . . Perhaps they seriously thought that I was guilty, but being unable to establish a strong enough case against me, wanted to give up the whole affair, rather than waste time on investigations which would necessarily be fruitless, since, in their minds *I* had committed the murder! (That is, had strangled my mother and my husband, concealed the jewels and the money, ransacked the drawers, put everything into confusion, splashed ink on the floor, and then gagged and bound myself, hands, feet and body!) . . .

The truth is I did not know what to think . . . But one thing I knew, and it was this: Three men in black gowns and a red-haired woman had been in my house on the night of May 30th–31st, 1908; they had stolen my money and jewels, and they had murdered my husband and my mother.

Those four persons were somewhere in the world, and, for my daughter's sake and my own, as well as in vindication of the law, I would find them.

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CHAPTER XVII

THE THRONE-ROOM

At the end of October—on the 25th, I believe—we left Bellevue, Marthe and I, and returned to Paris, to the house in the Impasse Ronsin. The chief alterations were completed, but there was still a great deal to do in the way of decoration, plumbing, and so on, and the workmen came every day.

I had been told the only way to stimulate investigations was to let the Press take the matter in hand . . . But before I did that I wished to make one more attempt at interesting the law in the Impasse Ronsin case.

I called on the *Procureur de la République*, who was then M. Monnier, at the Palace of Justice. Marthe accompanied me, and was present at the interview, which I will relate with *absolute* accuracy. M. Monnier, a very small man, with an expressionless face, and eyes that seemed to avoid meeting the eyes of those who addressed him, asked me what I wished.

"I have come," I began, "to entreat you to give orders for the various clues not to be abandoned, but followed up with the utmost vigour . . ."

The *Procureur* seemed quite surprised. Then, without hesitation, and in a lordly and lazy tone which clearly meant, "This affair does not interest me in the least," he replied: "Madame, we are following up some clues . . . There's the Noretti clue—a friend of Mr. Burlingham—for instance . . . That person is in Nice . . . If you want us to go on with that clue it would be better for you to go to Nice yourself . . . and pay your expenses, of course . . ."

I started and said: "What! I should pay to assist the law

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in tracing the murderers! . . . Why! I have spent enough money as it is . . . Even when I was asked to go to Boulogne for that examination—which you know I might have refused to go through, because of the state of my health—I had to pay about one hundred francs out of my own pocket for the motor-ambulance which took me!" . . .

The *Procureur* then said: "I should not mention Boulogne, if I were you . . . Do you know that I prevented your arrest that day?" . . .

I could hardly believe what I heard. His cold hard words and tone stung me into revolt, and I exclaimed: "I wish I had been arrested. There was and there is nothing against me. You would have had to release me almost immediately. I should have been vindicated, and all attacks would have ceased . . . You know there exists nothing against me!" . . .

"That's just why I prevented your arrest, Madame."

What could I reply to that. I shrugged my shoulders and waited. The *Procureur* pursued: "Really, why don't you keep quiet . . . I fail to see what you expect of life! . . . You have your daughter, you have still a few friends . . . . What more do you want! . . . Also I read in the *New York Herald* that you are going to let part of your house—to wealthy Americans, I presume?" . . .

"Do you waste your time, then, reading 'apartment' advertisements, *Monsieur le Procureur?*" I remarked . . . "As a matter of fact, I am trying to let part of my house, but I have found no tenant yet . . . There are other people I am more anxious to find: the murderers . . . Public rumours, as you are well aware, give out that I am the guilty person, and this must cease. The law must do its duty . . ."

Once again M. Monnier's eyebrows went up in surprise. He sighed, and then, looking not at me but at my daughter, he replied, in the same hopelessly slow and bored tone: "We do our very best, Madame, I assure you . . . I can only say you have the affection of your daughter, a few friends, a pretty house, enough to live upon . . . What more do you want? . . . Really, really, you should never expect too much of life."

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Indignant, I arose and, followed by Marthe, I walked to the door. There I turned and retorted: "No, I am not satisfied. I do expect more of life—above all, more justice. My daughter's life, my own, are being ruined because you don't care to find the murderers. I shall go on trying to trace them, even though the law, for some reason that I ignore, is not inclined to search for them. You cannot deny, sir, that certain clues have not been followed up as rapidly and as thoroughly as they should have been."

Thereupon I left the room with my daughter.

My first remark applied, as the reader has no doubt guessed, to the "stolen gowns." Who could deny that had something been done *at once*, there would have been a great chance of tracing and arresting the criminals? I do not say that it would have been an easy matter to watch every person connected with the Hebrew Theatre, or to find out all who were sufficiently conversant with the ways of the theatre to have been likely to steal the three gowns and the cloak which a few hours later were worn by the three men and the red-haired woman! But, whether an easy or a difficult task, it ought at least to have been attempted—and *at once*. The crime took place on May 30th–31st, 1908; the two cards which led to the discovery that three gowns and one cloak had been stolen from the Hebrew Theatre, were found in the Underground on the next day, May 31st. Only on the 10th of June were M. Guilbert, and Mlle. Rallet, M. Goldstein, M. Feinberg and others connected with the Hebrew Theatre interrogated . . . After that, nothing was done—except following the Burlingham and Noretti clues which were an indirect outcome of the affair of the stolen gowns—although one would think that any normal mind would have thought that those stolen gowns held the key to the whole mystery! It was only *after* my arrest, in December 1908, and during the early months of 1909, that, obviously in the hope of destroying the importance of the "stolen gowns" affair, the various witnesses connected with it were re-examined! . . . But what was the use of these investigations, seven to ten months *after* the discovery of the theft—a discovery which exhibited beyond a shadow of doubt that my ac-

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count of the tragedy was accurate? The three men and the red-haired woman were, of course, by that time out of reach.

Here let me quote some remarks made by Maître Antony Aubin at the trial, on the subject of the law's unpardonable lack of enterprise in the matter of the stolen gowns: "What I regret is that, during the first days which followed the crime, the police did not make full investigations—by order of the judge in charge of the murder case—among those chorists of all nationalities in this cosmopolitan group. What I regret is that this group, the most international one conceivable—and therefore the most elusive was not carefully 'sifted,' what I regret is that these nomads were allowed, during the first days of June, to scatter themselves abroad without interference. What I regret above all is that after so slight a search—nay, no search at all, at a time when the mystery could have been cleared up, the unfortunate woman was mercilessly tortured . . . How she is to be pitied, this poor woman, borne down under the weight of so many suspicions when *thorough* and *immediate* investigations might have led to the discovery of those who murdered her husband and her mother. Had it then been forgotten that, not only did she give an exact description of the stolen costumes, but that she had even mentioned the foreign accent of one of the assassins and the Italian accent of the woman! Now, go and try, throughout the world, to trace the wretches!"

And Maître Aubin, with relentless logic, added: "It would be rash to assert that the criminals should not have been looked for outside the staff of the Hebrew Theatre. Could they not have been amongst the group of fifteen to twenty persons—artists' models, Montmartre types—who, according to Mlle. Rallet, were at Guilbert's on the day when the costumes were hired, on May 27th? Could not the order given that day have been overheard, the messenger followed on the Saturday to the theatre, where you (gentlemen of the jury) know how robbery, undeniably the preface to the crime, was easy for any one. And could not this 'any one' be found amongst the mixed crowd, chiefly composed of foreigners, attending the performances at the Hebrew Theatre?"

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A VIEW OF THE HOUSE IN THE IMPASSE RONSIN

The ten-foot windows of the studio only visible

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After the interview with M. Monnier, the Attorney-General, I returned home, to the Impasse Ronsin, with Marthe. For many hours I turned the problem over and over in my mind, and all the time I heard the words of the *Procureur:* "You have your daughter, a few friends, a nice house . . . what more do you want!" . . . Oh, that attitude of bored superiority and indifference! Oh, the condescending *blasé*, supercilious manner in which I had been told: "We do our very best, I assure you!" . . .

Meanwhile, life was made quite unbearable to both Marthe and me. Insulting letters reached me day after day. Certain journals had begun to tear away the almost transparent veil which so far had covered their attacks of me, and the murderers were at large, undisturbed! . . . I should hardly have been worthy to be called human if I had not been in a state of rebellion against this intolerable position.

I had gone from Bellevue to see M. Hamard, but nothing had come from the visit, and after my interview with M. Monnier, I went once more to the head of the Criminal Investigation Department. Marthe was with me. The darling insisted on following me everywhere, for two reasons which may seem contradictory, but which nevertheless often go together: first, because she dreaded to be alone, and was frightened to the verge of collapse whenever I was away from her; and secondly, because she wanted to give me courage.

M. Hamard seemed very much annoyed at seeing me, although he did not make me wait. M. Chabrier, a cousin of my husband, had joined my daughter and me, but they both had to remain in another room, for M. Hamard received me alone. I explained to him the object of my visit, urged him to give up half-hearted methods, and to see that no efforts were spared in the search of the murderers. And I insisted on the importance of the "Underground cards" clue.

M. Hamard spoke the same words as the *Procureur:* "Madame, I assure you that we do our best . . ." He added a few, vague, common-place remarks, but concluded in a different tone, and with genuine sincerity. "I will look for the murderers until I find them!"

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In spite of this last remark, I got a clear impression that the *Affaire de l'Impasse Ronsin*, as I had been told, was *classée*.

On the way home I remained silent, but as we entered the garden, I took my daughter in my arms, and said: "Marthe, I will fight to the end, come what may. I owe it to you, to your father and your grandmother, and to myself." She gave me a long kiss, and big tears rolled down her cheeks as she whispered: "You are right, maman, the murderers will be found, and . . . Pierre, perhaps, will come back to me!" She had not yet quite forgotten him . . .

During the last days of October, I saw M. Marcel Hutin, who had often told me that the Press was almighty, and that he placed himself at my disposal. If the newspapers took up my case, the assassins would soon fall into the hands of the police. I believed him. I would at that time have believed any one who promised to help me to get at the truth. Marthe, my few remaining friends, every member of my family, inspectors—all advised me to go on with the case . . . My mind was irrevocably made up.

With M. Hutin's assistance, I wrote a letter to his newspaper, the *Echo de Paris*. In that letter, which was published on October 31st, 1908, I mentioned the lukewarmness and lethargy of those in charge of the case, and solemnly asserted my intention of continuing investigations, and avenging the dead. The letter created a deep sensation, and was everywhere reproduced. My house was assailed by journalists; I was in the hands of the Press.

On the day when the letter appeared, we went, Marthe and I, to the cemetery at L'Hay, a little village in the neighbourhood of Paris, where M. Steinheil was buried. Together we arranged the tomb, and decorated it with flowers, and—prayed . . .

When we reached the Impasse in the afternoon, we found it invaded by a score of journalists, who rushed to us and overwhelmed me with questions . . . but I firmly declared

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that I had nothing to add, for the present, to what I had said in my letter to the *Echo de Paris*.

Shortly afterwards, Marthe and I went by train to Breteuil, where my brother Julien lived. We arrived there in the evening and had a long conversation about the mystery. Like so many others, Julien thought a campaign in the newspapers the only means of getting at the truth. "Tell them what you know, what you think. Let them assist you in the search for the murderers . . . In less than a month our mother and your husband will be avenged, and you will be triumphantly vindicated of all these vile insinuations . . ."

Poor Julien—and poor me. In less than a month, I was . . . in prison!

The next morning—All Saints' Day—we ran through the newspapers—my brother, Marthe, and I . . . and were astounded. In every one of them whole columns were devoted to the murder mystery, to my letter published in the *Echo de Paris*. Some approved; others criticised. Some praised my courage; others made it clear that they considered this daring, reckless move of mine a sign of my guilt! One journal—one which always knows everything—probably irritated because my letter, re-opening the case, as it were, had appeared elsewhere, described my visit to the cemetery at L'Hay, and did not hesitate to say that I had driven there in a closed carriage with drawn blinds, like a guilty person . . . As a matter of fact, as the weather was splendid, and I thought that the country air would do both Marthe and me much good, we had driven to the cemetery in an open carriage.

Is it difficult to realise the harm such an untruthful comment in a newspaper, read by hundreds of thousands of persons, did to my case?

Marthe sobbed; my brother was furious, and I, profoundly hurt, wondered what to do.

"Go and see Maître Aubin," Julien suggested, "and the sooner the better . . ."

Marthe and I returned to Paris. I called on Maître Aubin, who I found was reading the newspapers.

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"I am bewildered," he began. "Why did you not tell me you were writing to M. Hutin?" . . .

"I was told that the Press would help me. . . . My conscience is clear. I fear nothing, and no one. We will succeed . . ."

"I have no doubt about it," said Maître Aubin.

"Until now, I have refused to talk to journalists, but in future I will reply to all their questions, if only they will help me. And if certain papers attack me, or publish false statements, you will have to put a stop to it. The die is cast; I will go to the end of this mystery, and reach the truth."

Maître Aubin was somewhat bewildered. At the same time I could see that he was glad to find me so determined.

Shortly afterwards I went to the Palace of Justice to see M. Leydet and M. Grandjean the *Procureur's Substitut.* Maître Aubin had written to them that, dissatisfied with the apparent sluggishness and indifference with which the Impasse Ronsin case had been conducted, I had decided to take him, Aubin, as *avocat-conseil.*

I entreated M. Grandjean to see things as they were: "Try to understand my position," I said. "You are a friend of M. Buisson. You know exactly what my circumstances are, and you, M. Leydet, have known me for years . . . Are you not both aware that the marriage of my daughter to M. Buisson's son will be broken off unless we get at the truth? M. Buisson, like every one else, is convinced that the affair has been abandoned . . . *You* can deny this . . . if it is wrong; you can declare that the detectives are at work . . . if they are! You know that I am innocent. Well, say so; do something . . . It is your duty."

M. Grandjean, instead of replying to my question, stammered: "But, Madame, it is appalling. . . . You have raised the newspapers; things are in such a state that we cannot leave the Palace without being pestered and mobbed by an army of reporters. Life for us has become an inferno. . . ."

"And what of *my* life?" I exclaimed.

M. Grandjean did not seem to hear, and pursued: "The clues are now being followed not only by our inspectors,

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but by the journalists, who take it upon themselves to act as detectives!" . . .

I interrupted again: "That is what you hate; what frightens you. . . . You are fully aware that you attached no importance to a great deal of information I gave you on various suspicious persons who came to the Impasse Ronsin, a few weeks before the crime, and about other facts and clues. If you, at the time, did make a move in any direction, it was because the attitude of the newspapers forced you to do so. . . . But it is too late now, after five or six months, to ask for alibis from those whom you suspect. . . . You shrug your shoulders. You look upon the matter in the same way as your chief. . . . I am more and more convinced that the case has been given up; I am even led to believe that it was given up very shortly after the crime! Well then, M. Grandjean, if you refuse to do what I have asked, I shall take the newspapers into my confidence, and they will help me. . . ."

Then, turning to M. Leydet, I added: "Will you kindly draw up a document by which Maître Aubin becomes my *avocat-conseil*?"

M. Leydet, deeply moved, exclaimed: "I beg you to reflect, to wait . . . before putting this affront on us . . . I have spared no effort . . . I am an honest man. . . ."

"I know that, M. Leydet," I replied. "But you have one great fault: you are a friend of mine. It would have been better for the public if the judge in charge of this case had been some one I did not know at all. I have been told that there was some thought of arresting me after your examination at Boulogne. If you had anything to do with preventing my arrest, I am sorry, for you would have had to release me at once, and then public opinion, satisfied that there was no case against me whatever, would have taken my part instead of accusing me."

The paper making Maître Aubin my *avocat-conseil* was duly signed.

A new life began for me, a life of indescribable activity, of feverish, unending rushing to and fro, a nerve-racking life

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of hopes and fears, of constant surprise and anxieties . . . I received every day from fifty to eighty visits from journalists belonging not only to the Parisian, but to provincial and foreign newspapers as well. Each had his clue and his theory; each had made some startling discovery and wanted my views on it, each told me that his journal was the only one which was really on my side, and each craved exclusive information . . . I received them in a house crowded with workmen who every few minutes came to ask for instructions! Shoals of letters and telegrams reached me, from journalists who assured me of their devotion, or wanted an immediate reply to an "all-important" question. Anonymous letters came in greater numbers than ever, some threatening my life and others denouncing Couillard, Wolff, or Balincourt—as usual. And there were letters from relations and acquaintances who spurred me on—as if I needed it!—and assured me the murderers would be found, that the newspapers would discover them, no matter what it cost to do so. Yet other letters, thrown over my garden wall, and anonymous of course, dotted the lawns and hung in the trees! . . . And I read them all eagerly. . . .

Journalists arrived at the house as early as half-past seven in the morning. Some called three or four times a day, and before returning home late at night they would call once more to hear if anything had happened that they would still have time to telephone before the papers went to press. . . . I was most grateful to them all, for they were working for me, and probably many of them were not responsible for the attacks against me in the journals to which they belonged. "I supply facts, Madame," one confessed to me, "but they are turned into anything that suits the editor or his employers."

I went round to all the Parisian newspaper offices and spoke my mind, and I thought that after this things would improve, and that fair and truthful statements would be the rule in the future.

In the evening, when I returned home exhausted, I was dumbfounded when M. Chabrier (a cousin of my husband and a post-office sorter, to whom I had let an apartment in my

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house) told me: "Don't be too angry with the *Matin*. Two of the journalists on the staff, M. de Labruyère and M. Barby, are waiting to see you. They have been here the whole afternoon. Be calm . . . I believe they are well-disposed, they will help you. . . . Don't turn them out. . . ."

I entered the house with Marthe. The table was laid for us in the dining-room. I found these two men seated and waiting. I told them that since I had said I would not be back till the evening, they should not have presumed to spend the afternoon in my house, especially as the journal to which they belonged was my bitterest foe. M. de Labruyère, extolled the *Matin*, explained that it was only a matter of misunderstanding, that M. Bunau-Varilla (the proprietor of the *Matin*) was extremely sorry. . . . He showed me a letter of M. Marcel Hutin of the *Echo de Paris*, in which the latter begged me to receive his friend and advised me not to decline the assistance of the *Matin*.

I was rather surprised, for it is unusual for Parisian journalists on the staff of rival newspapers to help one another in what they call a "big story." True, M. de Labruyère and M. Hutin were great friends, but I had seen so many instances of fierce rivalry amongst journalists during the past few days, that I could hardly believe what I read.

At the time, however, I had full confidence in M. Hutin, who was on excellent terms with a sculptor friend of mine, and, turning to the two journalists, I said: "I am quite ready to believe in the goodwill of the *Matin*. I shall continue reading the articles on my case which appear in its columns, and shall judge from them whether that goodwill is genuine."

M. de Labruyère then said: "Madame, M. Bunau-Varilla places at your disposal as much money as you may want to follow all the clues that you may suggest, and if you disbelieve me, please ask for an audience from M. Bunau-Varilla."

Although I was tired out and in no mood to laugh, I could not help smiling at the pompous, yet hushed tone of M. de Labruyère, when he mentioned "an audience" with his almighty chief.

"I will think of it later on," I replied. "I wish first of all

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to see how the *Matin* will deal with the Impasse Ronsin affair and with me."

M. de Labruyère was about to leave when I was suddenly startled by the flare and click of a flash-light. M. Barby had taken a flash-light photograph of my daughter and myself. I was angry, but the wary M. de Labruyère explained: "Believe me, Madame, nothing could be more useful to your cause than the publication in our journal of a photograph of you and Mdlle. Steinheil quietly dining together in this house where the crime took place. People will think: if Mme. Steinheil can eat in the place where her husband and her mother were murdered, then she must be innocent." I shrugged my shoulders, and bade the two journalists good-bye.

For awhile, I readily admit, the *Matin* carried on a vigorous campaign, which was in my favour, since it aimed at the truth, at the solution of the mystery. The articles of M. de Labruyère had undoubtedly much to do with the renewed activity of the police.

Meanwhile, the strain of my abnormal life, the constant excitement and strife around me, the ceaseless questions of journalists and visits of would-be advisers, the accumulation of clues, arguments, and suggestions, lack of sleep, and the almost complete loss of appetite, gradually brought me to a state of physical lassitude and mental agitation that bordered on madness. I still wonder to this day if it was that my distracted, tortured mind did not become unhinged sooner than November 26th (1908), the date of what has been called in this harrowing affair the "Night of the Confession," so easy was it for any one to persuade me into believing or saying anything, anywhere, and at any time.

When I left my house a crowd followed me and sometimes I heard a man or woman shout: "There she is, the murderess! . . ." Some said: "No, no, leave her alone!" I did not mind, I did not understand. . . . Nothing mattered. There was but one thought in my mind: "*They* will soon be found, and Marthe and I will breathe again; we will be allowed to live—like all other human beings. . . ."

Journalists followed me wherever I went. I liked them, I

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smiled on them, they were helping me, they were working with me, for me and Marthe. I always did my best now to collect my thoughts and answer their questions. M. de Labruyère begged me daily to come to the *Matin* offices, and I went, half-heartedly, to tell him what he wanted to know. When I did not go he came to fetch me, accompanied me in a motor-car, on my errands, to my notary, to Maître Aubin, and on the way he interrogated me, and wrote down every word I said, and probably much else besides. . . . Sometimes I was quite normal, but these spells of lucidity were daily growing scarcer. . . .

One day, at the *Matin* offices, M. de Labruyère telephoned directly to the Minister of Justice to ask him for an "urgent audience" about me. I was surprised, and said so, but he replied airily: "The Minister is an old friend of ours. We do as we please, here, with the Government."

I felt there was something not quite clear in this, and I may say that since the "Night of the Confession" I have been convinced that the direct telephoning to the Minister of Justice was a put-up comedy to impress me with the importance of the *Matin*—and I said to M. de Labruyère: "I think it far simpler that I should call on the Minister. He is sure to receive me, in the circumstances."

"No, no," came the hasty reply. "Let *us* arrange it. Let Bunau-Varilla arrange it. You must understand that Ministers must bow their heads before us. Surely you know that we end Cabinets as easily as we make them. . . ."

Thereupon, he once more begged me to meet M. Bunau-Varilla. "He has been rather vexed because you declined to see him. . . . But I am sure he will at once grant you an audience, if you wish it."

I consented. After all, I might as well see this man with unlimited powers, this Bunau-Varilla who "granted audiences" like a sovereign or a Cabinet Minister.

I went down three steps which led from a vestibule to the "audience-chamber." I found myself in a room of huge proportions, with only a long, seemingly endless table and the chairs around it for furniture. At the further end of the

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table stood a white-haired man, white-bearded, in evening dress (it was 5 P.M.), erect, solemn, gloomy—but not awe-inspiring. There was something in his attitude that reminded me of the "Statue of the Commander" in Molière's "Don Juan."

We were alone. There was a long moment of silence. M. Bunau-Varilla watched me with very keen eyes, and then remembering that I was a lady, he pointed to a chair, with a would-be royal gesture, and uttered a few words of welcome in an icy tone.

"I have just heard from M. de Labruyère," I said, "that you are sorry not to have seen me before, but I have been attacked, defended, re-attacked and re-defended by your journal, and before coming to you I wished to find out what your final attitude was to be."

"The *Matin*, Madame," he replied, less icily, "is entirely at your disposal. As you are no doubt aware, I am the master of public opinion. I change it as I please, I play with it. . . . Your letter to the *Echo de Paris* proved to me that you are a woman with brains and character; it pleased me. But I wish to tell you that I know a great deal about you and your past life—more, indeed, than you suppose, and I must tell you at once quite frankly that if you wish to find in me a real defender—which I am anxious to be—I shall expect greater frankness from you, fuller details—even confessions—about all you know that might help us to trace the murderers."

As he spoke he looked me intently in the eyes, as if to intimidate me. I thought, of course, that he was alluding to Félix Faure, to his death, to all that I knew about the President and other prominent men, but later I found out he had something else on his mind—the Rossignol affair, with which I will deal in the next chapter.

In my turn I looked him straight in the eyes, and replied firmly: "Monsieur Bunau-Varilla, if you expect great frankness of me, I expect the same of you. You have just spoken as if you knew things which you really do not know, but are anxious to know. Why are you not plain-spoken and sincere,

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why don't you tell me what you do know; or think you know?"

In the tone which Napoleon must have used when he congratulated one of his generals, after a brilliant move on a battle-field, M. Bunau-Varilla condescended to say: "Your firmness pleases me." Then he added, very gently and soothingly: "But you are only a woman, and, in spite of your courage, you need guidance. Let the *Matin* be your guide. If you place yourself in our hands you need fear nothing, and you are bound to reach the goal you have in view."

Finding that the interview had lasted long enough, I rose, bowed slightly, and left the Throne-Room.

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CHAPTER XVIII

M. CHARLES SAUERWEIN AND THE ROSSIGNOL AFFAIR

THE next day M. de Labruyère came with a gentleman I had never seen before. "This is M. Charles Sauerwein, who is a relation of yours and who knows you very well. . . ."

M. Sauerwein, whom I did not know at all, interrupted his colleague: "I have often met you in Society, Madame. I married Mlle. K., who is a cousin of yours." He spoke in a tone which very much displeased me.

I told him he was mistaken: "Mlle. K. is not my cousin; she is only a close friend of my sister, Mme. Seyrig."

"Had I not been ill recently," said M. Sauerwein, "I would have called on you sooner to tell you all I know about the so-called mystery of the Impasse Ronsin."

"I have seen many journalists," I said, "but I never saw you before. So you have left the Prince of Monaco, whose orderly officer you were, I have been told. You are now on the staff of the *Matin*. . . . Will you tell me in what way the Impasse Ronsin mystery interests you?"

M. Sauerwein told me that he had been "passionately interested in the Steinheil affair" from the outset, that he had spoken to M. Bunau-Varilla about the mystery. . . .

To my great surprise, M. de Labruyère said to me: "I prefer to leave you together. What M. Sauerwein has to tell you is no concern of mine."

I refused to let him go. "I beg you to remember, M. de Labruyère, that I have nothing to conceal. Whether M. Sauerwein has made some startling discovery or has merely an interesting fact to disclose, let him speak before you."

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I had seldom seen any one look so scornful as M. Sauerwein did then. I pointed out a chair to him, and, sitting down, he began in a melodramatic tone, which, I suppose, was intended to frighten me.

"Since you wish it, let M. de Labruyère remain in the room, but you will regret it when you have heard what I have to say, Madame."

"Come to the point."

"Just as you please. What I have to say is this. I know the murderers of your husband and mother." Then, looking me straight in the eyes, he added: "And you know them too."

"My position is rather awkward," said M. de Labruyère, but M. Sauerwein silenced him with a gesture, and went on:

"I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings, but I must say what I have to say without mincing matters. One of the assassins has fully confessed to me. He is your lover."

I was so indignant and dumbfounded that I could not speak. M. Sauerwein continued: "Two or three years ago, there was an attempt at burglary in this very house. You don't deny it, do you?"

"No! . . . Were I a man," I exclaimed angrily, "I would treat you as you deserve, for daring to say to me things which are false and which you know are false."

Taken aback, but still insolent, he said: "We will still get the whole truth out of you. Your husband went to the police commissary of this district, and an inspector was sent here to guard the house for a fortnight. The inspector was a tall, handsome and intelligent man. His name is Rossignol. After a good meal, he has confessed to me that he had relations with you, but they lasted only a short time. He was dismissed from the force for various reasons. It is no use denying that he was your lover. Rossignol is in our hands. If you confess the truth, we'll manage to arrest the two men and the woman who assisted him. They're all in Paris, and I know the haunt where they meet. Come now, admit the truth . . ."

I could not move, I could hardly breathe . . . I clutched my chair so as not to fall. . . . All I could do then was to listen, to listen intently. And the words M. Sauerwein spoke en-

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graved themselves deeply on my mind. They are still there, and I repeat them to-day with *absolute* accuracy. M. de Labruyère himself will not contradict me.

The man went on: "Confess, I tell you! . . . You are safe enough. . . . Those men will never mention you. We will arrange everything. The two men and the woman, who did not know you, will be sentenced. Rossignol will go to prison, but as a reward for his discretion, we will see that he is not kept there very long."

Once more, I ordered the man to leave my house. . . . It was all in vain. He defied me, and remained.

"It is useless for you to deny anything," he continued, relentlessly. "I know you well. . . . I know everything about the murder, I tell you. . . . Don't attempt to deny anything. Listen: I followed you from Bellevue; when you went to meet your lover Rossignol, I saw you. You took the train and reached the Saint-Lazare Station. I was in the same train; I did not lose sight of you; I watched you at the station while you walked about, in the 'Hall of the Lost Steps.'

"Rossignol arrived, saw you, rushed to you and you kissed him. Together you went to a restaurant in the Rue du Hâvre, outside the station. You talked very softly, but I sat at the table just behind you, and I overheard the conversation. You two were talking about the crime. Then you gave each other a *rendez-vous*. . . . Is that enough? Do you realise now the futility of a denial? Speak, speak . . . !"

I summoned whatever strength I had left, and said: "I have nothing to tell you, Monsieur." I turned to M. de Labruyère: "You must tell M. Bunau-Varilla that I insist upon his sending one of his men here to-morrow morning, to go with me to the Police Commissary of this district. . . . And then this infamous plot will recoil on the heads of those who have conceived it."

M. de Labruyère did his best to calm me, and kept on saying in the most apologetic and kindly manner: "Don't be angry. . . . I don't know anything about this fantastic affair. . . . I am sure now there must be some awful mistake."

M. Sauerwein had not done yet: "I have spoken the truth. The facts I stated are undeniable." . . . Then abruptly

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changing his tone, he remarked with hypocritical sympathy: "Oh! I quite understand how painful it is for you to confess. . . . It must be hard for a society woman to admit that she once had a 'weakness' for a man of low origin."

This was more than I could stand. I walked up to M. Sauerwein: "If you do not leave this house instantly, I shall send for the police."

The two journalists beat a hasty retreat.

Hardly had I heard the gate shut behind them, than Mariette came to tell me that M. de Labruyère had returned. Before I could say that I refused to see him again, he came in himself.

"Madame," he began, "I beg you not to mention this painful incident to any one; above all, not a word to other newspapers. You know I have always done my best for you. Surely you have some confidence in me. . . . Well, tell *me* the truth. Will you not admit that this Sauerwein story is true?"

"What, you too!" I exclaimed, bitterly hurt, for I trusted M. de Labruyère, and believed him incapable of insulting a woman, wantonly or otherwise. "How can you place the least credence in that vile story!"

M. de Labruyère murmured, reluctantly: "Sauerwein, I understand, has *all* the proofs. M. Bunau-Varilla knows all about this affair, but he may help you, if you tell us everything. Briand (the Minister of Justice) will help us . . . the whole matter will be arranged. Those men and the woman will not mention you. Certain promises will be made to them. . . . Remember the *Matin* is almighty. . . ."

I stopped M. de Labruyère: "I have heard enough. I have no one and nothing to fear. The *Matin* does not frighten me in the least. I shall come to the office and demand apologies for your colleague's vile insults, and, if necessary, I shall speak to M. Bunau-Varilla himself. Now, go, and remember that to-morrow morning some one on the staff of your journal will accompany me to the Police Commissary."

Need I say that after this new shock I passed such a night of anguish that my weary, harassed brain tottered one step further towards the brink of madness.

The next morning, quite early, M. Barby, of the *Matin*,

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called and said: "We are all indignant, Madame, at the way M. Sauerwein has treated you. I am ready to go with you to prove the absurdity of that accusation."

With Marthe and M. Barby I went to the Police Commissary. I told him what had happened, and he said: "This accusation against you is shameful. . . ." He remembered the attempted burglary and the fact that M. Steinheil had requested him to have his house guarded by an inspector, but that his wife was to know nothing about it. The inspector had watched the house for about a fortnight, from outside, in the Impasse.

As a matter of fact, I had only heard of this attempted burglary by accident. A man came from the police to inform me that the house would no longer be watched. As I knew nothing more about the matter, I expressed surprise and asked a few questions, and it was then that I heard of the attempt. (Men had been seen climbing over the wall of our garden, by some compositors at the printing works at the end of the Impasse Ronsin, and an alarm being raised, the burglars hurriedly escaped.) I spoke to my husband on the matter, and asked why he had not warned me. Somewhat embarrassed, he replied: "I did not want to alarm you, and gave orders that you should not be told about it."

Meanwhile, newspapers published articles in which it was said that a former police inspector was suspected of being the author of the Impasse Ronsin murders, and that it was rumoured that he had been my lover! . . . The reader can imagine the sensation such "revelations" caused, and the amount of harm it did me, with the public! Anonymous letters reached me in greater numbers than ever, I was dragged in the mire, and when I left or entered the Impasse, there were loud cries of: "Death to her" or "Look at the murderess." It was enough to drive any one mad—and it did drive me mad.

I went to the *Matin* offices, and M. Sauerwein apologised. Then he and M. de Labruyère begged me to accompany them both, with some detectives in the pay of the journal, to some awful cut-throat place, at one in the morning, where they would show me the two men and the woman they had

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mentioned, so that I might state whether they looked like the persons I had seen on the fatal night.

I refused: "Since," I said, "those men have confessed their guilt, as you have said, and that Rossignol, the 'chief' murderer is in your hands, all you have to do is to inform the Law, and have them arrested. When they stand before M. Leydet, or before M. Hamard, I will come and identify them."

I heard no more of this sensational story, and the *Matin* turned to other clues and theories. "Confess," I was told one day, "confess that it is a political crime. . . . Don't think we are fools! If the Rossignol clue is worth nothing, then there are other clues! . . . Help us. . . ."

I had not quite lost my reason yet, but I was blind enough not to realise that to the *Matin*, I was merely a useful, nay, a capital sensation-purveyor, a news-supplying machine that meant a valuable increase in the circulation of the paper. They only had one idea; to make as much as possible out of the "Steinheil Affair" and its wretched heroine, whether she had any news to give them or not!

True, most newspapers looked upon me in very much the same manner, but a great number of them were fair and human, and drew the line at certain "methods."

I called on Maître Aubin, to whom I told all that had taken place. He shook his head, and said, "Be careful. . . . Don't make an enemy of the *Matin*. . . . At the same time, I am sorry you sought the assistance of the Press. . . . The newspapers are exasperating the authorities."

I was stupefied. Whom was I to trust? Whom was I to believe? . . . Here was I become the sport of every wind that blew. . . .

Not a word about the Rossignol affair was said at my trial. But, in prison, when the *Dossier* of the "Steinheil Affair" was at last handed to me, I discovered among the 4500 documents and the 15,000 pages composing it, some sixty pages dealing with the Rossignol clue. Below, I give the essential parts of those sixty pages, quoting accurately from the *Dossier:*

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[Report]

PARIS, *November* 14, 1908.

Yesterday and to-day certain newspapers have indicated as having possibly taken a part in the crime of the Impasse Ronsin, M. Rossignol, a former police inspector. It is true that a M. Rossignol was inspector in the Saint Lambert district, and that he had a bad reputation. I believe he was dismissed in May last. . . . I was told that Rossignol is now a traveller for a firm that sells coffee. . . . The examining magistrate will be at liberty to decide whether it would be useful to make an inquiry, in order to establish how the man spent his time on the night of May 30–31, 1908.

The Chief of the *Sûreté*

(Signed) HAMARD.

(*Dossier* Cote 909)

[Official Report.]

November 23rd, 1908.

We, Octave Hamard, Chief of the *Sûreté*, &c., have this day summoned to our Cabinet M. Rossignol . . . thirty-eight years old . . . who made the following statements:

"It is difficult for me to say exactly how I spent my time in May last. I left the police at the beginning of that month and remained without occupation till June 1st . . . On May 30th, in the evening, I met my friend Thiret, a chauffeur; with him and another chauffeur we dined at Zimmer's, in the rue Blondel. We left the restaurant towards 10.30 P.M., and went to various cafés . . . In one of the places where we called (the address was given), people are sure to remember my presence that night. At 2.30 A.M. we were in the Faubourg Montmartre. It was 4 A.M. when I returned home to my wife and children. . . . On June 1st, I was engaged as a broker by a coffee firm. Later I was sent to Arras (in the North) . . . Then, I was suddenly called back to Paris. Certain newspapers, principally the *Matin*, were shown to me . . . I was told that I was suspected of being one of the authors or the instigator of the Steinheil Affair, and that I had refused to be confronted with

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the widow of the painter, I was then dismissed from the firm. . . .

(Signed) ROSSIGNOL HAMARD."

(*Dossier*, Cote 910)

PARIS, *December 5th*, 1908.

Report from the Commissary of Police, Chief of the "Mobile brigade" to the Chief of the *Sûreté:*

In reply to your demand for details concerning a certain Cavellier (a friend of Rossignol), who once belonged to the "Mobile Brigade" as inspector, I have the honour to supply the following information:

"Cavellier was appointed Inspector on January 1st, 1906, and was ordered to resign on August 31st of the same year . . . (on account of various robberies, mentioned in this document). The Commissary of Police.

(Signed) VALLET.

(*Dossier* Cote 921)

[Report.]

PARIS, *December 15th*, 1908.

. . . The inquiry made among the *entourage* of Mme. Steinheil about Rossignol has established that the latter *is unknown in the house, that he has never been seen here, even at the time when he was inspector in this district.* . . .

(Signed) INSPECTOR DECHET.

(*Dossier* Cote 911)

January 4th, 1909.

Before us, André, examining magistrate &c., . . . at the Palace of Justice . . . has appeared . . . M. Maurey, thirty-seven years old, Inspector, of the *Sûreté.*

Question. "We have heard a rumour according to which you are supposed to know of several meetings between the ex-inspector Rossignol and Mme. Steinheil, before and since May 31st, 1908?"

Answer. "I can tell you of a number of facts which may explain the murder. Rossignol, whom I only met in circum-

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stances which I may describe, was an Inspector, attached first to the Vaugirard, then to the Epinettes 'commissariat' of police. In March and April 1908, I tried to trace a gang of burglars, but did not succeed. . . . In April 1908, I became convinced that Rossignol was connected, most suspiciously, with this gang of burglars, and whilst searching for them, I came across Rossignol. In the middle of April 1908, one evening, towards seven o'clock, I saw Rossignol, after visiting a bar in the Avenue de Clichy, join at a bus station, opposite the Saint-Lazare Station, an elegantly dressed woman, of about thirty, tall and stout, with a long face. Rossignol and the woman went to dine in a restaurant opposite that station. . . . They parted, after kissing, at the corner of the Rue de Rome and the Boulevard des Batignolles, at about 11 P.M. That was the only time I saw the woman with Rossignol.

"Later, Inspector Dechet having heard that Rossignol might have had something to do with the Affair, it was agreed that when Mme. Steinheil returned—she was then at the seaside (Louvières, in Normandy)—she should be pointed out to me so that I might say whether she was or was not the woman whom I had seen dining with Rossignol, near the Saint-Lazare Station. This was agreed, not only with Inspector Dechet, but also with Chief-Inspector Dol.

"Now, between that time and the time I was able to see Mme. Steinheil this is what happened.

"In August 1908, being in the company of a colleague, I met several times a certain Cavellier, who for a year, a few years ago, was my colleague, though I did not know that he was an Inspector. I believe he is attached, officially at least, to the detective department of the Ministry of the Interior.

"In August, during our first meetings, Cavellier spoke to me about the Steinheil affair. . . . *He told me that he was working in that affair for M. Sauerwein, adding that this gentleman was a Special Police Commissary at the Ministry of the Interior.* He also said he was shadowing Rossignol, that he believed Rossignol was Mme. Steinheil's lover, that he thought she might have 'done the deed' (*fait le coup*), and that, in any case, he was certain that Rossignol and Mme. Steinheil had

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met, once before May 30th, 1908, and once since then, and both times in a restaurant or a hotel close to the Saint-Lazare Station. . . . Cavellier told me all this at the end of August. . . .

"Cavellier has always impressed me as a man who, having discovered—I don't know how—that I had been concerned with Rossignol, was trying to 'bait' me in order to find out what I knew about Rossignol. *I have never believed one word of what he told me about Madame Steinheil and Rossignol.* I told Chief-Inspector Dol, however, of my conversations with Cavellier. Chief-Inspector Dol gave no more credence than I did to Cavellier's statements.

"In September or October, I went to Bellevue with Inspector Dechet . . . I saw Mme. Steinheil. I then found that Mme. Steinheil had far more refined features and a much rounder face than the woman whom I had seen with Rossignol, in April 1908, and further that Mme. Steinheil was far slimmer and not so tall as the other woman. To make quite clear my absolute conviction that Mme. Steinheil and the other woman were not the same person, I told all this to Inspector Dechet, the moment we left Vert-Logis.

"A fortnight later, I told Cavellier, whom I happened to meet, of my conviction. He made no remark.

"Since then I have met Cavellier once or twice, but we never talked again about the Steinheil Affair.

(Signed) MAIRET, The Inspector.
ANDRÉ, The Examining Magistrate.
SIMON, His Clerk.

(*Dossier* Cote 918)

[Report.]

PARIS, *January 5th*, 1909.

In the absence of M. Cape, Chief of staff at the *Sûreté Générale*, M. Sébille, Director of the Investigations Department, declared that M. Sauerwein was unknown as a special Police Commissary, and had never belonged in any capacity whatever to the *Sûreté Générale*.

(Signed) INSPECTOR MAIREY.

(*Dossier* Cote 920)

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And here is the report of the examination, by M. André, of "Cavellier, 31 years old, private detective."

Question. "Do you know Mme. Steinheil by sight? If so, when did you first see her?"

Answer. "I knew her by sight. I met her for the first time in August 1908, at Bellevue, near Vert-Logis. I recognised her with the help of a description which I possessed. I have never spoken to her."

Question. "Do you know Rossignol?"

Answer. "Two or three days after my encounter with Mme. Steinheil, I met him at the Saint-Lazare Station. Mme. Steinheil (whom I then saw for the second time) was there and talked with him and another gentleman. She lunched at Scossa's. During the early days of November 1908, an inquiry which I was making brought me into contact with Rossignol, who was then at Avesnes-le-Comte (in the North of France). I then recognised in Rossignol the unknown man whom I had seen in August talking to Madame Steinheil at the Saint-Lazare Station, and afterwards lunching with her at Scossa's. I could not absolutely identify Rossignol; but I had the impression, although Rossignol seemed to me about 20 livres (six lighter, that he was the unknown man I had seen."

Question. "Tell us in what circumstances you came to make investigations about Madame Steinheil and Rossignol?"

Answer. "I make personal inquiries for people. . . . As regards this particular case, *I would rather not tell you the name of the person for whom I made the investigations*, as I consider myself bound by 'professional secrecy.' *At first, the object of my inquiries was to find out all that Madame Steinheil did*—that is, in August 1908. That is how I took the necessary steps to see her, and did see her, at Bellevue. It was also in these circumstances that I watched her two or three days later at the Saint-Lazare Station, and saw her talk, then lunch with the man I told you of. I found out nothing in particular about Madame Steinheil's doings. In November I made inquiries about Rossignol. This was after the publication in the *Petit Parisien* which stated that Madame Steinheil had special relations with an inspector—afterwards dismissed

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—who had had to make inquiries at her house on the occasion of a burglary, which took place two years ago, I believe. I found out that the only Inspector in the Vaugirard district who had been recently dismissed was called Rossignol. I heard Rossignol was at Avesnes-le-Comte, and I went there. I had made inquiries, and had discovered that the man had a bad reputation, and had been connected with burglars. At Avesnes-le-Comte . . . I talked to Rossignol about the article in the *Petit Parisien;* he said he had not seen it; I made him read it, and he said afterwards: 'No, I don't believe they mean me in that article, especially as *I have never known Mme. Steinheil, have never seen her, and have only heard of her through the newspapers.*' I then asked him whether he thought the murder in the Impasse Ronsin had been committed by one of the Vaugirard gang. To this he replied: 'No; there are no heads strong enough in Vaugirard to-day, to carry out such a crime.' I concluded our interview by telling him: 'I am returning to Paris to render an account of my mission to the person who sent me, and it is possible that that person will contradict the article in the *Petit Parisien.*' The contradiction appeared in the *Matin* on November 17, but I must tell you that it was not for this newspaper that I went to Avesnes-le-Comte. Since my interview with Rossignol in that city, I have seen him—the last time at Dijon, towards December 10. I went to Dijon for the same person who had sent me to Avesnes-le-Comte. There Rossignol merely confirmed what he had told me before. . . . I am not sure that the woman whom I saw at the Saint-Lazare Station was really Mme. Steinheil. Two or three days before I had seen her, or rather the person I thought was Mme. Steinheil—for all I had was a description—near Vert-Logis, without a hat, in ordinary dress. The woman I saw at the station wore a full mourning and a thick veil, and it is quite possible I made a mistake. Also when I saw Rossignol at Avesnes-le-Comte, I was not absolutely certain that I was standing before the man I had seen at the station with the lady I have just mentioned."

Question. "To sum up your explanations, it appears that you are unable to assert that in August last, at the Saint-

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Lazare Station and at Scossa's, you really saw Rossignol and Mme. Steinheil."

Answer. "*No, I cannot be positive on the point; besides that is exactly what I have always told to the person for whom I made those investigations.*" . . .

(*Dossier* Cote 923)

And it was on the strength of such "discoveries" that M. Sauerwein thought fit to insult an unfortunate and innocent woman, and fiercely accuse her, to her own face, of a ghastly crime!

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CHAPTER XIX

THE PEARL IN THE POCKET-BOOK

Maître Aubin grew daily more alarmed at the turn events were taking. He read a number of the anonymous letters I received, went carefully through every newspaper, felt the pulse of the Public, and shook his head in dismay. One morning he said to me: "Go to my friend Goron, the ex-Chief of the *Sûreté*. He has founded a private agency, and he may be able to assist you. I have the greatest confidence in his ability and his *flair*."

I followed this advice. M. Goron, a small, smart man, with white hair and moustache, searching eyes, a keen, intelligent expression, received me at once.

I may mention here that I am firmly convinced that, like M. Leydet, M. Hamard, the successor of M. Goron at the *Sûreté*, always believed in my absolute innocence, and I readily recognise that he treated me not only with the utmost fairness, but with dignified courtesy. . . . But I felt that, whenever he promised to spare no efforts in the search for the murderers, he was not quite sincere. My impression has ever been that M. Hamard, for reasons which I have never fully fathomed, had his hands tied, as it were. . . .

M. Goron went straight to the point, in a persuasive though very blunt manner: "I have my views on this mystery, and I will tell you what they are. . . . I may possibly hurt your feelings, but—I always speak my mind. The Affair is quite clear to me. It is *not* a 'low crime' (*un crime crapuleux*). The Burlingham clue? . . . Nonsense, farce, absurdity. The case is more serious. Between ourselves—you have never

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spoken about your close relations with Félix Faure . . . You did wisely; the law doesn't want to know about that portion of your life, however important it may be in connection with the murder . . . But my opinion is this: that the murder is a direct sequel to your friendship with the late President. You have been brave and discreet, and I congratulate you. As a matter of fact, you know too many things, and that kind of knowledge is always dangerous. . . . I know all about your friendship with Félix Faure, of course; I also know that you had nothing to do with his strange death, and I further know that you have nothing to do with the assassination of your mother and your husband. Your husband had too much confidence in various persons who were not worthy of it, and he paid dearly for his grave mistake. . . ."

I was conquered by the evident sincerity and the business-like ways of M. Goron, and without hesitation I told him about the pearl necklace, the documents, and the "mysterious German."

He then said, quite simply: "Exactly. I had guessed something of the sort. The Impasse Ronsin affair is not unique of its kind. There is nothing absolutely new in it. I believe that what took place is this. Some man or men—who did it for the money the documents might represent, or out of *fanfaronade* or some kind of morbidness—heard that you possessed most interesting papers. They managed to become close friends of your husband. They found out, somehow, that the house would be empty that day, since you had decided to go to Bellevue. You know the rest."

I told M. Goron about the letters I was constantly receiving.

"Yes, yes," he said. "All this may be interesting. I have a good mind to lend you some of my men. There are workmen in your house just now. Well, my men will disguise themselves as workmen, and they will observe everything and everybody. I have never seen your house. Will you receive me and my son? I will look the place over. My son will assist me. We will come as foreigners who wish to visit the studio. . . ."

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I consented, of course. M. Goron came to the Impasse Ronsin the next day and examined everything with his son. Before going he said to me: "Persevere in your endeavours to solve the problem, but take care of yourself. Leave the Press alone. Tell the journalists you are exhausted, done for. . . . You are in a terrible state; you will lose your reason, if you go on with this kind of life. I have known even the strongest men come to such a state, in their desire to work out a murder mystery that the Law had given up, that they have had to be put in an asylum, or they have been seeing the murderers everywhere. I could quote to you the example of two men, both of superior intellect, who committed two dreadful crimes, convinced that they were killing the assassins they had so long been searching for; one of them is a convict now; the other died in prison—he was one of my friends—and all the members of his family were ruined and disgraced. . . . Look here, I will give you some sound advice: Think of your daughter. Go with her to Bellevue or to the Riviera, where it is bright and sunny. Try to forget. Send me all the letters you receive, even those from the people you trust, from your friends. . . . Everybody seems to have an influence over you. . . . That is bad, bad." . . .

"No," I said. "I must fight to the end. You will see I shall win yet, and the whole world will know. . . ."

He interrupted me: "Leave the world alone. Think of yourself, think of your child, and let me act for you. You are in a fever, your eyes have an unhealthy glow, you look worn out. At this rate, in a week's time you will be seriously ill. If I were your doctor, I should lock you up for a time in a nursing home. . . . Meanwhile, I will send you some of my men who will carry out my instructions. But promise me to do nothing, and to go away and rest soon, very soon! . . ."

I promised, and shook M. Goron warmly by the hand. Then I went home, very much pacified and fully determined to follow his excellent advice.

When I reached home, I found a journalist waiting for me. He was M. D., an eighteen-year-old reporter. He came frequently and always had extraordinary things to say against

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Couillard—things which, curiously enough, tallied with the remarks about my valet contained in a large number of the anonymous letters I received. (Couillard was now once more in my service. He had not found a situation as a chauffeur and had returned to me.)

"Madame," explained the young journalist; "you can go and tell M. Hamard about Couillard. I know all about him!"

I was truly amazed at the number of people I met who dramatically declared to me that they knew all about me and every one else! . . . Still I listened to M. D. intently, as he gave me extraordinary information about Couillard, his family, his past, his habits and what not.

"To be quite on the safe side," M. D. concluded, "I would like to know the name of Couillard's birth-place. I want to know why he left his village to come to Paris . . . Did you know, Madame, that your valet, who you told me said he had never been in Paris and could not find his way about, had been in Paris for two years as a navvy!"

I was amazed. "You must be mistaken!" I exclaimed, but the journalist gave me all kinds of convincing details, and I began to remember the denunciations in the anonymous letters. . . . A few untruths spoken by my valet did not prove that he was a murderer, but I was not in a normal state of mind, and M. D. spoke with such passion that I began to think he was right. I had been in the past months so often swung from clue to clue that I was ready to admit almost everything. He told me about the private life of Couillard, gave me details about his "friends." . . . "He probably possesses an 'identity-card,' I should very much like to see it. But if we ask him for it, he will guess something if he is guilty or if he knows things about the murder which he does not dare to say. . . . How could we arrange to get at the information I need, without alarming him?"

I went to Mariette, and asked her about Couillard. The old cook said to me, in her usual rough but not unpleasant manner: "Madame, I don't know anything. He comes from a village . . . Are they going to worry Couillard now? Are

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I. M. DE BALINCOURT II. REMY COUILLARD

Sketches by Mme. Steinheil

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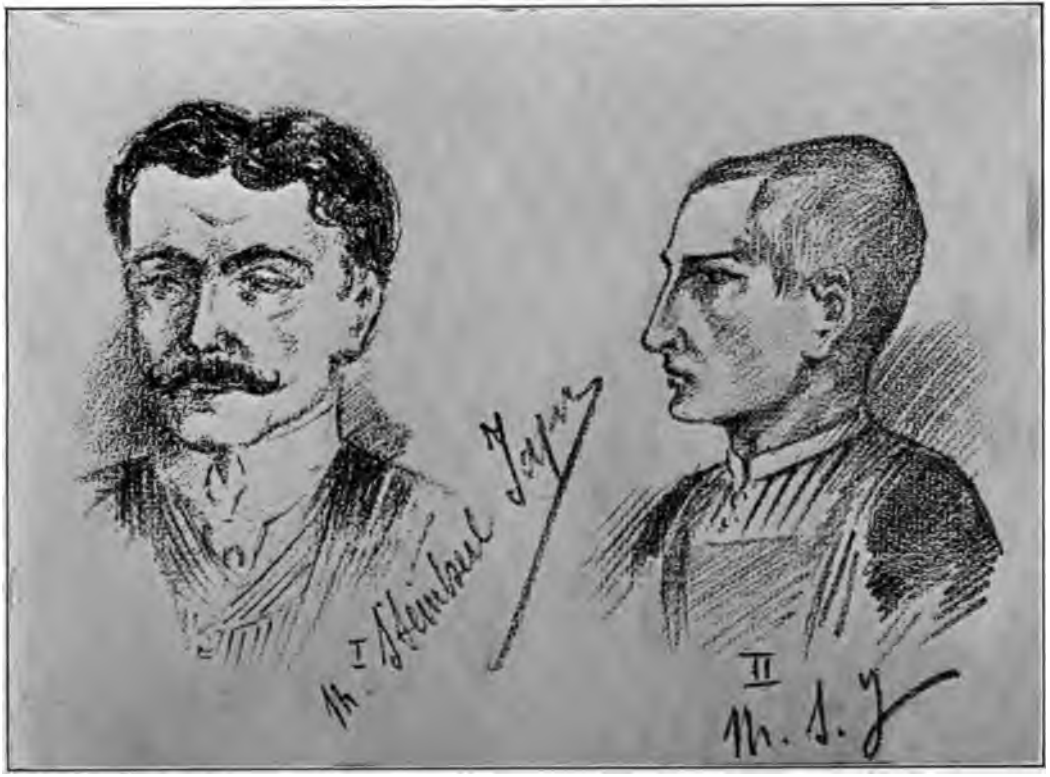

I. M. DE BALINCOURT II. REMY COUILLARD

Sketches by Mme. Steinheil

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they going to ask me questions again? I am tired of all journalists, and I am tired of the police."

"Mariette," I said. "Do you know the name of Couillard's village, yes or no. I am told it is essential to know it."

"Ah! Well, if that's all you ask, it is a simple matter. His overcoat is here. You will find the name you want in one of his pockets, in his pocket-book."

I returned to M. D. and said: "I don't know what to do. What you want is in Couillard's coat."

"What does it matter, Madame? There is no harm in examining his pocket-book. All I need, after all, is an address."

Mariette brought the pocket-book. M. D. opened it, found in it the address he wanted, when, suddenly, I noticed in the pocket-book an envelope with Marthe's handwriting, and addressed to her fiancé, Pierre Buisson. My daughter, who was present, took the letter and exclaimed: "Mother, that is the letter I wrote to Pierre on the eve of All Saints' Day!"

"What! Has Couillard kept the letter all this time!"

M. D. rubbed his hands: "You see, I was right about Couillard. A letter written by your daughter is found in your valet's pocket-book, that is most suspicious. He surely did not take the letter just for the sake of the stamp, which has been cut off, by the way. He would have destroyed the letter." He hesitated, then, suddenly exclaimed: "That letter was written—and stolen—at the very time you had decided to take up the Affair again. I suppose Couillard wanted to know what you and your daughter intended doing . . . Let me go and examine his bag. We may discover something more important and more conclusive." M. D. went up to the attic with Marthe. Couillard was not in the house at the time. I had engaged him again at the end of October, to please my daughter; she thought, very justly, that if Couillard had been unable to find a situation, it was on account of the Impasse Ronsin drama, and owing to the fact that after his examination at Boulogne, there had been rumours of his arrest. Couillard worked in the house all day, but did not sleep there. He had asked me, however, to let him leave his bag in the attic, and he frequently went up there.

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M. D. returned and said: "The bag is locked, and so I cannot open it. But we are nearing the solution of the mystery!"

When the young journalist had gone, I had a long conversation with my daughter. Marthe was amazed. She could not believe what she had seen. She had always had the greatest confidence in Couillard. We both tried to find out why he had stolen that letter. It could not have been for the sake of a penny stamp! What was the real reason, then? . . . (Later another stolen letter was found, in Couillard's bag this time, a letter written by me to an old friend, Mlle. Lefèvre.)

Since that dreadful month of November 1908, I have fully realised my mistake. I asked my former valet's forgiveness at my trial, as I have already stated, and I do so now, unhesitatingly, in these Memoirs. Moreover, I have gladly offered him, recently, some financial compensation. I did a dreadful thing when I accused him without proofs of his guilt. But the reader should try to bear in mind the state I was in—a state of mind which made me see as proofs the untruths he had told me about his past, and the letters he had stolen.

All night long I lay awake, and worked myself up against Couillard. . . . I remembered and reread the anonymous letters . . . in which he was stated to be the murderer, or, at any rate, a "man who knew," and others telling me: "What Public Opinion does not understand is why you should have been spared, whilst your husband and your mother were killed." And he was still alive, like myself! I was told over and over again that the murder must have been committed by some one who lived in the house. Well, there were only Couillard and myself besides the victims, in the house. Since it was not I, it must be Couillard! . . . Then there was the key that he had lost shortly before the fatal night. . . . Then, he had kept the revolver, instead of handing it back to my husband. . . . I thought, too, of another crime, the murder of M. Rémy, a banker, a week or so after the Impasse Tragedy. M. Rémy had been killed by his valet, a young man . . . who was not suspected for a long time, and it suddenly occurred to me that Couillard had been out on Saturday, May

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30, in the evening. I had sent him to take a wedding present —the Sèvres vase—to M. Ch.'s daughter. . . . On his way Couillard had perhaps met his accomplices. During the night he had left his room above the studio, and gone down to receive the other men. The red-haired woman was perhaps his mistress, and he had let her come so that she might get some of the jewels. . . . Couillard was rather timid and nervous. Perhaps he was the one man who remained motionless, near the door of my room, and whose eyes had looked so frightened. . . . I did not recognise him because of the black gown, the long felt hat, and the false beard. It must have been a false beard. . . . How my imagination ran riot, how the most insignificant facts that I had observed began to fit in with the theory with which I became more and more obsessed. Madness had begun. Henceforth, I was almost irresponsible. I had had so many shocks, gone through so many crises, been played with, insulted, threatened, accused, and tortured so relentlessly during the past weeks that I ceased to distinguish between what was right and what was wrong, what good and what bad, what criminal and what legitimate. . . . I was in the hands of several journalists, who forced my door open when I refused to receive them, who treated my house as their own, and wrote almost anything they pleased about me. So many clues had been taken up and abandoned, that I clung desperately to this one. Yes, Couillard would have to confess, and then it would all be over. I should have the right to live, to breathe, to sleep. . . . I had no friends. . . . My beloved Marthe was as ill as I was, and wept day after day. She had lost her father, her grandmother, her fiancé. . . . Winter had come, with howling winds, chill, driving rain, and days of gloom. . . . It was dark and it was cold. . . . An effort, and I should win. Yes, M. D. was right; Couillard was the man. Of course he was the criminal . . . of course. . . .

The next morning there came more letters, still more letters, and Couillard's name was mentioned in most of them. . . .

I went to M. Goron, the ex-chief of the *Sûreté*, in whose judgment I had the greatest confidence, and told him all about the discovery of the stolen letter.

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him to reproduce his licence. We went first to see whether the letter was still in his pocket-book: Couillard's overcoat was in Mariette's room. The pocket-book was found and examined; the letter was still there. . . .

"Rémy Couillard was then called in. I asked him if he would accept a situation as chauffeur, and whether he could show me his licence. He replied that his licence was in his pocket-book. But, as had been agreed, Mlle. Steinheil went to Mariette's room, fetched the pocket-book, and handed it to Couillard. I rose and watched the valet while he fingered various documents and looked for the licence. Seeing a black-bordered letter, I said to him: 'What's this? Are you in mourning?' Without replying, Couillard went on looking for the licence. . . . Madame Steinheil then said: 'That is one of our letters.' She took the pocket-book from Couillard's hands, placed it on the table, and drew out her daughter's black-bordered letter. Couillard, obviously perturbed, said (in answer to a question) that he had found the letter on the edge of a table. Mme. Steinheil then drew from the portfolio the envelope addressed to M. Pierre Buisson; that envelope was open and had been deprived of its stamp.

"Couillard lost all self-control. Mme. Steinheil asked him why he had stolen the letter, and what excuse he had to make.

"Panting and with his face distorted, Rémy Couillard cried 'I am caught! . . . I will talk only when I am before M. Hamard. . . .'

"I then said to M. Chabrier that after this scene, the only thing for him to do was to return with the pocket-book to M. Hamard. I also told him to call first, at the *Matin*, to fetch M. de Labruyère, so that they might go together to the *Sûreté*. . . ."

(*Dossier* Cote 43)

To me in my abnormal, almost morbid state of mind, those words: "I am caught! . . . I will talk only before M. Hamard!" came as a revelation. Couillard was livid and sank into his chair like a man who had been found out or who had

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given up fighting. . . . "I am caught!" That was a confession obviously! At last the truth would come out. I did not think Couillard guilty, but felt sure that he knew a great deal about the murder, and now he would have to speak . . . Then suddenly a thought occurred to me: Would Couillard speak? M. Hamard had declared to M. Chabrier that he did not consider the stealing of a letter a serious offence. . . . If Couillard was to speak, to confess what he knew, something more was needed than the stolen letter. . . . Whilst the others discussed the "next move," I went into my room. I was frantic with excitement and thought: What shall I do to make him speak? I could not see then that those words, "I am caught," might have had no meaning and merely refer to the stealing of the stamp, and I kept muttering: "I am caught! I am caught! . . . What does he mean by that?" And I recalled a conversation between Couillard and Alexandre Wolff a few days before. Mariette was away at the time and I was able to enter the pantry, when I heard the two men talking together. (Alexandre Wolff had come to see his mother and had remained to dinner.) Wolff was saying: "You fool, why did you not do as I told you? Have you taken it away from the attic?" And Couillard replied, "She won't give me the key; it is not difficult to get in." Thereupon I heard Mariette returning, and I withdrew.

As I recalled that dialogue, I could not imagine that it merely referred to Couillard's bag, but found in it new grounds for my suspicions.

I had Couillard's pocket-book in my hand. I took from a drawer a pearl which came from the "new-art" ring I have already mentioned, wrapped it in tissue paper, and slipped it into the pocket-book.

Now, I thought, they will arrest him. He will be frightened, and if he knows anything, as I am sure he does, he will make a confession. If he is really quite innocent, I will tell my friend M. Leydet that I placed the pearl in the pocket-book, and I will explain why. After that I returned to the dining-room, and handed the pocket-book to M. Chabrier, who put it in his pocket and walked away.

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I will now continue quoting from the evidence given by M. Barby.

". . . Whilst M. Chabrier was carrying out his mission, Couillard remained seated in the dining-room, and did not utter a word. After a time, he said he wished to write a letter. I told Mariette to bring some note-paper, and he started writing. I saw that his letter began with the words: 'My dear mother . . .' and the first lines expressed regrets. When he had finished, and just as he was about to place his letter in an envelope, I told him: 'You read Mlle. Steinheil's letter; why should I not read yours?' He hastily put the letter in his pocket and remarked that I was not an examining magistrate, but only a journalist.

"Couillard remained in the dining-room until M. Chabrier's return. It was then about 8 P.M. . . ."

(*Dossier* Cote 43)

What M. Chabrier had done can best be described in his own words (evidence given before M. Leydet and M. Hamard on November 21st, 1908, the day after the incident here related). ". . . Having placed the pocket-book in the pocket of my overcoat, I went to the *Matin* offices.

"M. de Labruyère joined me, and together we went to the *Sûreté* where we were both received by M. Hamard. I placed the pocket-book on his table, but he refused to take possession of it or to take any steps against Couillard without formal instructions from you (M. Leydet).

"I replaced the pocket-book—which had not been opened—in my overcoat, and I went to your *Cabinet*. You were not in, so I left a note, and afterwards, went with M. de Labruyère, to the *Matin* offices. Then, for the first time, the pocket-book was opened; its contents were examined by M. de Labruyère, myself, and a third person (on the staff of the *Matin*), and the tissue paper with the pearl, was found by M. de Labruyère. . . .

"The third person said the pearl was worth £16, but, seeing that it was pierced at both ends, he remarked the value might be about £10. . . .

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"Everything was replaced in the pocket-book and with it I returned to the Impasse Ronsin . . ."

(*Dossier* Cote 24 and 11)

M. Barby's description of the scene on the afternoon (evidence given before M. Leydet, on November 24, 1908) concluded as follows:

"Madame Steinheil was called outside the dining-room by M. Chabrier. Shortly afterwards, she returned and said: 'Couillard, you may go. You can ask M. Leydet for your pocket-book to-morrow.'

"Couillard rose, and when Mme. Steinheil asked him if he had any excuses to make, he replied: 'If I have anything to tell you, I shall say it only before M. Hamard or M. Leydet.'

"(After Couillard's departure) M. Chabrier told us: 'We found a pearl worth a few hundred francs in Couillard's pocket-book, at the *Matin*.'

"Then, before Mme. Steinheil, before Mme. de Toulgoët and her son, before M. Chabrier and myself, the pocket-book was opened, and the pearl produced. I took it and handed it to Mme. Steinheil who said: 'It is a pearl from one of my stolen rings!'

"We were all greatly excited. I advised Mme. Steinheil to go at once to the Police Commissary . . . and accompanied by Mlle. Marthe and M. Chabrier, she drove there with me in my motor-car. . . ."

(*Dossier* Cote 48.)

The Police Commissary was not in, and I said: "The simplest thing to do is to go straight to M. Hamard."

That very night, detectives arrested Couillard.

In spite of the whirl and confusion of my thoughts, I realised to some extent during the night, when I had rested a little, the gravity of what I had done. I decided to gather all possible proofs that the ring from which the pearl had been taken had *not* been stolen, proofs which I would reveal as soon as Couillard had made some sort of confession.

The next morning, I went to the *Sûreté*, and asked for a

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detective to accompany me to the Rue de la Boëtie. It was Inspector Dechet who came, and together we went to M. Gaillard, the jeweller who had made, from a sketch by the donor and with a pearl brought from Dufayel's, the "new-art" ring given me by M. Ch. M. Gaillard was able to find in his books the exact description of the ring, the weight and shape of the pearl, &c. . . . I told him that the pearl found in my valet's pocket-book (he had, of course read about this incident which was dealt with in all the newspapers) was the one in the "new-art" ring.

Later, I saw M. Souloy. "Have you still in your possession," I asked him, "the mounting of the 'new-art' ring I asked you, in June last, to alter? You set the pearl on a new ring, but have you kept the old mounting?"

"No, Madame, it was melted down with the gold of the other jewels you asked me to alter."

"I regret this," I said, "for it might have been useful to me. You see, we may perhaps at any moment have to go to M. Hamard and give some explanation about that ring."

I knew now that I could prove at any time that the pearl could not have been stolen on the night of May 30th–31st, 1908. All I had to do now was to await events and hear whether Couillard had made a confession.

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more about the whole affair than I do!" To me all this appeared of paramount importance. Couillard would soon make a clean breast of everything. Victory was at hand at last—and with it peace. At the same time I thought of Alexandre Wolff. The son of my cook was on most friendly terms with my valet . . . I remembered that shortly after the crime, Wolff had been much better dressed and, as some one remarked, "rolled in money." He was tall and very strong, knew the house well. . . . Was he one of those men in the black gowns? Through his mother he could know everything about our movements. . . . I wondered.

Then, one night, a day or two after the arrest of Couillard, an incident took place which filled me with new suspicions and fears. Each hour, indeed, brought its shocks and alarms that completely unhinged my mind, and, as if some cruel demon drove me, I rushed, blind and unheeding, to my doom.

I was sitting in my room (which was on the ground floor now that the alterations had been made in the house), and reading, once more, the letters against Couillard and Wolff.

It was late, and I supposed that everybody was in bed. Suddenly, I saw a point of light moving through the hall towards the staircase. (My room was separated from the hall by the dining-room, which had large windows opening upon it, and as there was as yet no door to my room—the workmen not having completed their work—but merely a piece of tapestry which was drawn aside at the time, I could see from my room through the dining-room windows, any light moving in the hall.) I was astonished: I walked stealthily to the dining-room window and saw Mariette and her son. What were they doing there at this late hour? It was about midnight. . . . They went upstairs as softly as possible. I had not yet undressed and I followed. When I reached the foot of the staircase, I heard Mariette tell Alexandre: "Don't make the least noise." I tried to follow them upstairs, but my legs shook under me, and I remained on the lower steps.

The two went up, up. . . . I heard them open the door of the attic and enter. . . . How long they remained there I could not tell. . . . I shook with fear and cold; the blood

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ALEXANDRE WOLFF AND HIS MOTHER, MARIETTE WOLFF

Sketches by Mme. Steinheil

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throbbed painfully through in my temples. . . . I heard them again and jumped up. They came down, stopped on the second floor at the entrance of the studio, and went in there. . . . I ran out in the garden to see whether there was any light in the studio. There was none. They evidently held their candle quite low, and away from the windows. I rushed back to the foot of the staircase. They came down. Just as I was about to go back to my room, so as not to be seen, I heard Wolff say ill-temperedly to his mother: "I tell you that three are missing," and Mariette replied: "Well, I can't help that! . . ." Wolff then said: "Now that he is locked up, we shan't know anything. Ah! Why couldn't she leave things alone: everything was quiet. Why could not you shut her mouth! . . . But be careful. She is wide awake. I saw that the other evening when I had dinner here. She was kind as usual, but her eyes were not the same. . . ." They had stopped on the first-floor landing. . . . I feared that I should not have the strength to reach my room, but I managed somehow to get there. Marthe was sleeping peacefully. The night-light fell on the letters scattered about the table, and cast a soft glow on my daughter's face. The sight of her gave me courage. I looked at the clock. It was 12.40 A.M. I went back to the dining-room window, and saw Mariette and her son creep noiselessly through the hall. I ran to the door and, hearing no noise, went two or three steps into the hall. I then heard the voice of Mariette saying: "Give me a light. . . . I can't see." The voice came from the staircase leading to the cellar, and the door at the top of the staircase was ajar. What were they doing there? . . . I hid again, and soon the two came up.

Alexandre Wolff looked wild. . . . "Hush!" said Mariette, and they went to the *concierge's* lodge, through the kitchen. (Mariette acted at that time as cook and doorkeeper.) The doors were closed, and I could hear nothing. I waited. The hall being almost entirely of glass, I could not help seeing Wolff leaving the house. My feelings during all this time may be surmised. At last I saw the door of the lodge open, and then Wolff walked stealthily to the gate, opened it, and

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disappeared. I went back to my room to see Marthe. She had slept soundly. I looked at the clock; it was 1.30 A.M. I wondered what I should do. For the first time I was afraid of Mariette, who had always been the most devoted servant any one could wish to have, in spite of her rather blunt ways. Mme. Chabrier was upstairs, in her little apartment. Should I go up and ask her for assistance? . . . I hesitated, then made up my mind. I lit a candle and went straight to the lodge. The opening on to the garden, near the gate into the street, was still open. I found Mariette sitting near her bed in a state of stupor. She started when she saw me, and she seemed at once to realise that my feelings towards her were changed.

"What are you doing there, at this time of night?" I asked her. "I have just heard the gate of the Impasse being shut. Has some one gone out, then? And why is your door wide open? What is happening? . . ."

"Nothing, Madame, I opened the door to have more air. . . . I don't feel well. . . . All these stories, these new investigations . . . I don't like them. Everything will go wrong. Couillard will perhaps give us no end of trouble. Who knows! . . . He will perhaps accuse me or my son. . . . Ah! I can swear to you that if they touch my son . . . you know me. . . . I shan't be afraid of any one!"

She had a terrifying appearance, the old Mariette, with her eyes that flashed angrily, her threatening jaw, and her big clenched fists. She rose, came close to me, and said: "Well, and what about you? Why aren't you in bed at this time?"

I was afraid, but summoning what little strength was left in me, I said: "Because I have been awake . . ."

"Since when?"

"For over two hours; since eleven o'clock. . . . Why do you look so frightened?"

Mariette came still closer to me, until her face almost touched mine. I had not even hinted that I had seen her and her son, and yet she said suspiciously and threateningly: "Well, and then? . . ."

"And then . . . Mariette? It is for you to explain to me

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what you did with your son in the attic, in the studio, and then in the cellar. . . . Answer me."

She stared at me, hesitated, and then replied: "What did I do in the attic? . . . That's no business of yours. I am free to do as I please. There are things of mine in the attic. If I like, I can give things to my son to take with him, can't I?"

"No, Mariette, your son has taken nothing with him. He carried no parcel when I saw him go . . . or else, what he took must have been very small."

She seized my hands: "Look here, Madame, I have had enough of all this. Leave me alone. I am not in a mood to give explanations. You had better return to Marthe and go to bed. . . . Do you hear?"

Her attitude and her tone frightened me so much that I hurried away. I spent the rest of the night on a chair, watching over Marthe, listening to every noise. I seriously thought of calling M. Hamard's attention to the events of that night, but Mariette had been an exemplary servant for many, many years. I suspected her son, who, I had been told, was extremely violent and had had several encounters with the police, but I could not believe that old Mariette had had anything to do with the crime. And I thought of her daughter and her son-in-law, Mme. and M. Geoffroy, who had both always been most devoted. The wife constantly came to my house to do odd jobs, and the husband was ever ready to help. They kept the house when we were away on a holiday, and I could rely on them implicitly. . . . If I accused Mariette and her son in any way, they would all suffer, alas! . . . I thought, too, that possibly there was nothing evil in that midnight visit to the attic and the cellar. Perhaps, after all, Mariette had wished to have a private conversation with her son, and had wanted to show or give him various things of hers. . . . Perhaps her angry attitude towards me could be explained by the fact that she feared lest I should suspect her son, as I had done Couillard. Perhaps she was as distracted as I was myself, and almost irresponsible for what she did or said! . . .

At the same time, I was trembling with fear, and wondering.

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. . . At daybreak, I fell asleep out of sheer exhaustion, but was soon awakened by the banging of the doors. I went out to see what the matter was.

M. Hamard had arrived with a whole troop of detectives to carry out investigations throughout my house. The workmen came as usual, and also a small crowd of journalists. Mariette was furious, and swore like a trooper.

Suddenly, a man rushed in through the gate. He came to me and said: "I hear that M. Hamard, the Chief of the *Sûreté*, is here. Please Mademoiselle, tell him I absolutely must speak to him!"

"Well, and what have you to tell him?" said M. Hamard. He turned to me, and whispered: "You see, people still take you for your daughter!" Then, addressing the man, whose name was Wagner, he added: "You can talk before this lady. She is Mme. Steinheil herself, and I am M. Hamard."

He waved the journalists away, for all had, of course, eagerly pressed around us. The man then breathlessly declared that he could give most valuable information about Alexandre Wolff; that Wolff, on the day after the crime, had a great deal of money in his possession. . . . M. Hamard asked me to leave him alone with the man; and I withdrew.

For practically the whole of the day, the detectives searched the house. They examined everything in Mariette's lodge, searched the cellar, and also the attic. I helped them. I felt sure that they would discover something that would lead to the complete solution of the problem which was driving me crazy. But the detectives found nothing, and I grew desperate.

The attic was a vast one, and encumbered with boxes, furniture, models' costumes and what not. . . . I went up to watch the detectives at work. I wondered what had happened during the night, when Mariette and her son had been there! Those words: "There are three missing. . . ." haunted me. I was care-worn and ill. I had not slept for forty-eight hours and I had gone through a thousand maddening anxieties. . . . I wanted the men to find something. . . . It seemed to me that they were not keen enough, that they did not search as thoroughly as they should. . . . I rushed to my room, took a

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tiny diamond in a box, rushed back to the attic, and dropped it in the dust. Yes! that was a good idea. They would renew their efforts, now . . . I called their attention to the glittering speck, and one of the detectives picked up the small diamond. M. Hamard, who was present, quickly pocketed the stone, and remarked: "We will have to find out whether it is a real diamond or mere paste."

The detectives left the house at the end of the afternoon. The journalists were at liberty to come in now, and they did come in! Fifty or sixty of them. They scampered in like wild beasts! They asked questions of every one in the house. Even those I had thought ponderous and dignified lost all control of themselves. . . . A shower of questions rained upon me. "Write anything you please," I said wearily, "but do leave me alone, I must sleep, I must forget all this. . . ." I locked myself up in a room and snatched an hour's sleep, and it was Marthe's turn to watch over her mother. . . .

A noise like the voice of an angry sea roused me. I went to the garden gate, and through the small wicket I saw a great crowd of men and women—women especially—who howled fearfully. Marthe held my hand and trembled. "Mother, mother, what is it?" she kept asking. A sedate English—or American—journalist, who was with us at the time, said, "Don't pay any attention, Madame. Leave this gate. Some side with you, but others loathe you—and neither the one nor the other knows why." And he added in a murmur, "The great enemy of reason, the Multitude. . . ." Words spoken at a dramatic moment often engrave themselves on the mind, and that last sentence often came back to me. I have since found that the journalist was quoting Sir Thomas Brown.

Mme. Chabrier, who had gone out early in the afternoon, had the greatest difficulty in reaching the house, and so had the messengers and the postman, who brought shoals of letters which I read more eagerly than before. . . . At last, late in the evening, policemen cleared the Impasse Ronsin and the storm died away. We sat down to dinner, Marthe and I, but couldn't eat. . . .

In the middle of the night—it must have been 1.30 A.M.—

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the door-bell rang persistently. I rose, and dressed hastily, Mariette was already at the gate. "Who is it?" I cried; "what is it?" There were half a dozen journalists outside, who wanted to know if it were true that I had committed suicide! Mariette shouted, "No, of course not! Go away!" and banged the wicket to. That night again I was unable to sleep. I thought that I could not live through another day such as I had just passed, another night such as was now slowly dragging away. I was convinced that I had reached the limit of human endurance, but events were to prove to me, very soon—within the next twenty-four hours in fact!—that I was wrong. My calvary had only begun. . . . There is perhaps no limit to the human capacity for suffering, physically and mentally.

I thought of Couillard. What was he doing? Saying? Were my suspicions, were all the anonymous letters, quite wrong? Would he confess? Had he anything to confess?

An inspector had called and told me during the afternoon that Couillard had said that M. Steinheil, on the Saturday, May 30th, less than twelve hours before the crime, had told him that he expected some important letters, and had ordered him to hide them under the table-cover in the hall, when they came. Two messages had come, and Couillard had hidden them as he had been told. . . . These were important facts. It was not yet time to go to M. Hamard and tell him the truth about the pearl. . . . Couillard was making new and highly interesting statements, and might know and say much more. . . . If Couillard was quite innocent, and knew absolutely nothing that could throw some light on the crime, it was wicked of me to leave him in prison when, by stating that I had placed the pearl in his pocket-book merely in order to make the valet speak, he would have been at once set free. But at that time I did sincerely believe that he was not quite innocent, and was convinced that at any moment I might hear that he had revealed the great secret and the names of the assassins. And, therefore, I waited still a little longer. . . .

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CHAPTER XX

THE SO-CALLED "NIGHT OF THE CONFESSION" (NOVEMBER 25–26, 1908)

EARLY in the morning, journalists came as usual to "find out the latest," and as usual they followed the workmen into the house.

At 10 A.M. detectives arrived to continue their searching, and once more, I hoped that they would make some discovery that would lead to "the truth." Mariette was in a state of frenzy and said to me, the moment she saw me: "The crowd is against you. Couillard is arrested. They will arrest my son and me, next, I bet. You're going to tell the *Sûreté* what happened the other night, when you saw me and Alexandre. . . . Let all this fuss be stopped. . . . Life isn't worth living. . . . Send the police away from here. They are driving me mad with their endless investigations. If all this goes on much longer, I don't know what may happen. At any rate, I shan't stop at anything! After all, if there is any one who knows something about the murder, it must be M. Bdl."

Mariette knew of my brief friendship with M. Bdl, and was fully aware that my relations with him had long ceased, but, for some reason, she wanted to intimidate me, and she hurled that name at me as a weapon, for she realised how anxious I was that Marthe should not know about that indiscretion.

Mariette went on, more fiercely than ever: "If the police don't leave this house, if you say a word against Alexandre or me, I shall say all I know about M. Ch. and M. Bdl., and then we shall see! Ah! you say you love your daughter. . . . Well, I love my son. . . . We shall see, we shall see. . . ." Then, abruptly, her tone changed, and she said desperately: "There is only one thing for me to do; I must get drunk." . . .

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There was a constant buzzing in my ears, my whole body was on fire, as it were, and it seemed to me as if my heart, which beat so terribly fast, would suddenly stop. . . . I looked at Mariette, and with all the resolution I could summon, I said to her: "I shall go to the end of this affair. I shall speak all the truth, I shall say all I know." . . .

Mariette was no longer listening. She held her poor head and mumbled: "I must get drunk, drunk . . . that's the only thing to do." I pitied her and walked away.

M. Hamard arrived, saw his men, and then came to me and said: "We can find nothing. . . . True, many months have elapsed since the murder. . . . By the way, M. Leydet would like to see you at the Palace of Justice. Inspector Pouce will come here and accompany you. . . . The crowd is rather hostile."

"Very well, M. Hamard," I replied.

At that very moment, a whole band of journalists literally burst into the house. . . . Some of them actually entered through the windows on the ground floor. They surrounded me, and such was the babel they made that I could hear only fragments of sentences: "Have you heard. . . . A jeweller has said that . . . there is an incident . . . Couillard . . . the ring. . . . " Flashlight explosions startled me at every moment. . . . A thousand questions were hurled at me. . . . One journalist on the staff of the *Gaulois* asked to photograph my hand because there was a "ring-story" coming out. . . .

I was ill and I was bewildered. There have been many days in my life when shock has followed shock and emotion emotion, as if some pitiless fate were trying to crush me, but that day, November 25, 1908, was undoubtedly the most painful, the most harrowing in my whole existence.

Whilst I tried to answer the questions of the journalists, since they would not leave me alone until I did, various people came to visit the apartments which were to let. (I had already let the vast studio, with its antique furniture, to a foreign artist for £320 a year. The three-years' lease was signed, but my arrest altered everything, and the lease was made null and void.)

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After the journalists had gone, I tried to draw up an inventory of the silver, furniture, and linen in the apartments I wished to let, but the pen shook in my hand and I had to give up the attempt.

Lunch-time came. It was impossible for me to eat. I had lost all appetite, and besides, journalists once more invaded the house. Why did I not barricade my door? For the simple reason that the workmen, who were now nearing the end of their task, came and went constantly. Some brought rolls of wall-paper; others took away boards, ladders, tools. . . . And whenever the gate was open to a workman, one or several reporters would rush in behind him. Besides, I have no doubt that had everything been barricaded against them, they would have jumped over the wall, as I had seen at least one do. . . .

Inspector Pouce came and said to me: "Take your jewels with you; they will be wanted."

I fetched them, and with the inspector drove to the Palace of Justice in a taxi. On the way I noticed that Inspector Pouce looked extremely sad. I told him so.

"Oh, Madame," he said, "if I were in your place, I should probably have lost my reason long ago. How those who, thinking they were doing the right thing, urged you to seek the assistance of the Press, and to make fresh endeavours to trace the murderers, must regret it now that they realise what martyrdom you have endured . . . a martyrdom which has not yet come to an end."

I listened to Inspector Pouce, but did not understand him. I was too numb and broken. How I should have loved to sleep. . . . I said so to my companion. My head felt so heavy. . . . I almost fell asleep in the taxi.

At the Palace of Justice I was received by Maître Aubin and M. Steinhardt, his secretary. The former looked very pleased: "Things are going on very well," he exclaimed. "Couillard has made several interesting statements already. . . . By the way, there is something that worries me for your sake. Are you sure you have not two pearls alike? If so, you had better say it."

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I did not reply, but went alone into M. Leydet's *Cabinet*. Through an open door, I saw him, in the next room, walking up and down.

He came in and bowed to me, as usual, but I noticed he was extremely pale.

"Bring in Couillard," M. Leydet ordered, "his counsel, M. Bouin, the jewel-expert, M. Gaillard, and M. Souloy."

When they had all come and sat down, M. Leydet, in a voice that shook with emotion, explained to me that M. Souloy had made a statement. . . .

I was dumbfounded. I did not mind the fact that M. Souloy had made a statement, evidently about the pearl. What upset me was the fact that he had done so too soon, before Couillard had made a full confession of all he knew. "So, that is what you have done, M. Souloy," I exclaimed. "And this after I had called on you and told you we should have to go to M. Hamard, one day." . . .

"Madame," said the jeweller, "my conscience . . ."

I suddenly found myself unable to think clearly, unable to realise things. . . . M. Souloy had made the *talisman* years ago. . . . He knew me well. Surely he could not believe me capable of a wicked action. Why had he come spontaneously to M. Leydet to "make a statement." Did he take me for a criminal? What did it all mean? . . .

M. Leydet and the others gave all kinds of explanations. I was unable to follow them. . . . Then, M. Leydet said to me: "You had *two* 'new-art' rings, had you not? One stolen by Couillard and the other handed to M. Souloy?"

I could have replied just the word "Yes," and Couillard was lost, but although everything was blurred in my mind, I saw that it would be criminal to do such a thing, and that whatever Couillard might have done, I had no right to tell falsehoods, and I replied, "no, only one."

M. Leydet looked at me, with almost haggard eyes, I repeated, "Only one."

"But do you realise the gravity of what you are saying?"

Thereupon one of Souloy's employees came in, and looked

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at me fixedly and in a way that terrified me. And I thought of certain words spoken by M. Sauerwein, of the *Matin*.

After Couillard's arrest, M. Sauerwein, no doubt in order to make me forget his insults and his fantastic accusations in connection with the Rossignol "clue," had come to tell me, "I know the jeweller who bought the jewels stolen on the night of the murder. He is a receiver of stolen goods. . . . I must not tell you his name. . . . He has a wife and children. He is afraid of being lynched, if he were discovered. . . . But he is in my power. . . ." And I was mad enough to believe M. Sauerwein.

When I saw M. Souloy's clerk, I felt sure he was the man M. Sauerwein had spoken of. I thought that he could be employed and at the same time be a "receiver." For several hours I was questioned, but I replied in a vague manner. . . .

Later, I felt so faint that Maître Aubin was called in. . . . M. Leydet watched me in a strange manner, and said many things which I did not understand. . . . And then, with Maître Aubin, I left the room. He asked me to meet him the next morning; he wanted to have a serious talk with me, and afterwards we could call together on M. Leydet.

"Why not talk things over to-night?" I suggested.

"No, no; I am not free now."

Had Maître Aubin been "free" that night, I should probably not have been a prisoner the next day. Then he added, "Above all, don't receive a single journalist."

But when I went home with Marthe, who had come to fetch me, it was in the company of a journalist, and in the house I found two more, one belonging to the *Gaulois*, and the other to the *Petit Journal*, who had been waiting for me!

Both, however, were extremely polite, and when I told them that I was dead beat, and that I would perhaps see them the next morning, they bowed and walked away.

A representative of the *Temps* also came, and asked: "What is all this trouble about your jewels, your rings? . . . Can we do anything for you?" . . . He spoke softly, courteously, and I was thankful to him, but I had nothing to say.

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I sank into an arm-chair. Marthe, near me, sobbed. She said she had been told at the Palace of Justice that I would be arrested. . . . It was heartrending to see her tears.

At about nine o'clock, just as I was about to return to my room, for, even on the day after the crime, I had not felt so utterly broken down, Mariette came to say that M. Barby had arrived. The *Matin* again! Then M. Hutin, of the *Echo de Paris*, entered the room.

Before I could utter a single word M. Hutin exclaimed angrily, almost coarsely, just as if he had every right to invade my home and speak to me as he pleased: "Ah! that's the way you go on! And I was stupid enough to take up your case! So you have been making a fool of me! What have you been up to, eh? . . . The black gowns: that's a fable! Your jewels: none have been stolen! The money: there was none! You will have to tell me the truth. . . ."

"Leave this house," I said; "I haven't the strength to argue with you." . . .

He gave a wicked little laugh, and went on, "Everybody is against you now. It is not Couillard they should have arrested. It is your lover . . ."

My lover! I thought of M. Bdl., whom I had not seen for months, and I said to myself, "What! they are going to arrest him! What is the matter? . . . What do they want?" . . .

The door was flung open. M. de Labruyère rushed in. He gesticulated frantically, and looked even more angry and threatening than M. Hutin. . . .

"You are a wretch, nothing but a wretch," he began. "It's dreadful. Couillard is innocent; he never stole the pearl." . . .

I interrupted him. "Have pity on me. I have not slept for four days. Leave me in peace. I have nothing to tell to either of you. I am ill, can't you see I am ill?"

They shrugged their shoulders. M. de Labruyère went on: "I have just left the Minister of Justice. There is only the *Matin* and the *Echo de Paris* who can save you. You will do as you are told. If you don't, then you, your daughter, your brother, your lover, the Chabriers, you will all be arrested. . . . Your cousin Meissonnier has already been ar-

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rested. A whole squadron of cuirassiers has surrounded his house at Poissy to save him from the fury of mob. . . . The Impasse is blocked with people. Your house is surrounded. There is an immense crowd outside, and they want to set the house on fire, want to lynch you." . . .

I listened to all this, but I did not understand. I listened so intently that every word spoken that night left an indelible mark in my mind. Had I understood, I would have realised that they were recklessly lying in order to wrench from me a confession, which I could not make since I was innocent, and that, however ill and distracted I was, I ought somehow to have summoned up enough authority to have made them leave the house.

Then, the tune changed. Intimidation had achieved its aim. I was before the two men, trembling, incapable of defending myself. They could now try another method: the sympathetic. After strong drama, pathos.

"Poor woman, tell us the truth. We are your best, your only friends. . . . Confess, if not for your sake, then for the sake of your daughter, the unfortunate little Marthe, who is there sobbing, in that room. Speak to us, and you are saved. We are the only people who can save you both! Be quick, be quick. Listen to the mob outside. Can you hear it?" . . .

I could hear a wild surging in my ears, but I had heard that noise very often of late, when I was ill and worn. . . . These men were putting me on the rack. What did they want of me? What had I done to be treated in this way? . . . Had they made up their minds to make me lose my reason completely? . . .

Then, suddenly, I saw a face through the window of the dining-room. . . . It was the face of an ugly old woman with wild eyes, and the old woman was shaking her fist at me . . .

I cried, "Look out! look out! Mariette is there!" . . .

"All right . . . never mind," said M. Hutin. "Now, listen to us. You are lost, and not only you but every one in the house unless you confess."

"Bunau-Varilla is rich," said M. de Labruyère. "He'll save you. They are coming to arrest you all, you and Marthe.

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You understand, your little Marthe, first of all. But we can just save you, if you will be quick. . . . We are in a hurry." . . .

Yes, they were in a hurry: their sensational copy had to go to press in time. I had said nothing yet, and they had still to write what I would say, what they felt sure they *would make me say!*

M. de Labruyère went on, in a coaxing, pathetic manner, "All we want is to save you, in spite of yourself! I tell you Bunau-Varilla will do anything. We will smuggle you abroad and you will forget all your troubles." . . .

He came quite close to me and added: "Think of your poor dead mother. She called you 'Meg, Meg . . .' that night . . . Well, Meg, Meg, tell us everything."

I faltered. Everything seemed to turn around me.

"What do you want me to say?" I asked.

M. Hutin seized my hands: "Everything: only, you know, don't talk to us about black gowns. Nobody believes in them; it is of no use insisting any longer upon them. Don't talk about the jewels either, that's played out, too. You had better begin by telling us the truth about that pearl, and also tell us the name of the man who was your 'friend.' . . ."

I replied: "It was I who put the pearl in Couillard's pocket-book, it was I who put the diamond in the attic; the name of my friend was Bdl."

Mariette was again making signs at the window, and I thought once more of Alexandre Wolff. . . .

The two journalists kept asking me questions. They both spoke at the same time. I had sunk from my chair on to the floor. I would not, I could not, reply. . . . They grew angry. *I fell on to the floor.* I besought them to go; they seized me by the wrists and shouted: "Confess, confess! . . ."

Then seeing that I did not speak, M. de Labruyère whispered: "I will tell you the whole truth. I have seen Briand this afternoon. You must speak. But above all, don't say what you have said before. Public Opinion doesn't believe in the story you told. Tell another! Tell us the names of the murderers."

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My blood ran cold. I no longer had any capacity for thinking. Those men had killed my mind, my reason. They wanted names, any names.

I spoke, one, two, three names. I said "Salvator" (one of my late husband's models). They were not satisfied! I then said: "It's not Salvator, it's his brother!" That would not do either. . . . Then I thought of Alexandre Wolff, who had been so much in my mind lately. . . .

"Alexandre Wolff," I cried. "He is the murderer."

This suited them. They began to scribble. They made suggestions as to things that had taken place . . . They had evidently (as I realised afterwards) received anonymous letters, like myself. . . . I replied: "Yes, yes." . . .

Then, their faces suddenly brightened up. They had won! The most sensational article for many years would appear in a few hours' time under their signature. The greatest day in their career had come!

Then, they felt grateful though in a great hurry, for it was after midnight, and they spoke a few words of encouragement.

"Everything will be all right. We will send you a motor-car. You will go to a hotel, so as to avoid being lynched, you and your daughter. And afterwards you will go abroad, and forget everything." (My daughter heard them speak these words.)

They shook hands with me, in the heartiest manner, and said: "Remember, we are all your friends, your best, your only friends. You can always rely on us. Briand, Bunau-Varilla, will defend you. With such protectors, you are absolutely safe, and your little Marthe too. The law cannot touch you, in these circumstances." . . .

They went to the door. Then M. Hutin came back. He had forgotten something of considerable importance:

"Whatever happens, don't change anything of what you have told us. . . . You and your daughter are lost if you do!" . . .

They went at last. I had been racked and tortured *for four hours;* I was bruised, and broken, and bleeding; and in

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the agony of my pain I sank to the floor, and lay there, wishing with all my heart for the relief of death. Then, mercifully, everything went blank. . . .

I could not better compare that "Night of the Confession" than to a terrible nightmare. In a nightmare appear the people one has seen or has been talking about during the preceding hours. . . . Twice that day, I had been asked about M. Bdl.; twenty times I had been spoken to about Alexandre Wolff. And there were the anonymous letters. I quoted a whole passage of one of those letters, to my tormentors, as in a trance, and that made up part of my "confession." "Wolff had come to steal. . . . He had threatened to declare that I ordered him to murder my husband and my mother, if I denounced him . . ." This theory of the crime had been time after time suggested to me in letters. And thus, I spoke about M. Borderel and accused Wolff. And when I saw Mariette at the window making signs to me, I felt sure the letters were right and that Wolff was the murderer. . . .

Perhaps, alas, the poor woman realised that those men were making me say what they pleased, and she trembled for the son she loved.

A nightmare indeed! . . . But after a nightmare, one comes back to life, peace, and even happiness, and exclaims: "Thank Heaven, it is not true; it was only an awful dream!" . . . But after my nightmare, I awoke to worse tortures: I awoke to find myself torn away from my child, arrested, and thrown into prison. The ghastly drama was not ended; it had only just begun.

Would to God that I could forget that nightmare, but, alas! I remember it in every painful detail, as I set it down here. I hardly understood what I was told or what I said; I was clay in the hands of the two men who in their professional zeal stopped at nothing to wrench from me matter for sensational copy—but clay retains impressions. They made me lose my reason for a time, but not my memory, and after three years, the details of that awful night of agony are still so cruelly vivid in my mind that my hand trembles as I write.

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My whole being shudders, I hear the men's harsh voices, I feel their hands close upon my wrists—and the pen falls from my nerveless fingers. . . .

I will now quote—in all fairness—the narrative of the "night of the confession" as M. Hutin made it to M. André—the judge who replaced M. Leydet—on November 27, 1908 (two days later):

"I wish first of all to state that in this affair I merely acted as a journalist, and that I have never in any way confused such a *rôle* with that of the Law."

Then, after a few remarks about my letter addressed to the *Echo de Paris*, and published on October 31, M. Hutin proceeds: "I arrived (at the house in the Impasse Ronsin) at about 9.30 P.M. As soon as M. Chabrier saw me, he exclaimed: 'Ah! you come as a saviour,' or at least he said, 'You are welcome.' (The bitter irony of it.)

"Mme. Steinheil herself received me with much sympathy. I noticed she was *profoundly depressed* (affaissée). She received me in the dining-room. . . . I told her that to my mind the best thing she could do was to free her conscience by telling me the whole truth. I told her that the next day, the Law, by its own methods, would extract the truth from her, and that she had better make a clean breast of everything.

"At about 10 P.M. M. de Labruyère arrived.

"He, too, strongly insisted that Mme. Steinheil should tell the truth. At one moment, Mme. Steinheil exclaimed: 'What do you want to know from me?'

"We said that she had certainly placed the pearl in Couillard's pocket-book herself, she admitted it, and we asked her why she had done it. She hesitated for a long time . . . then, finally declared that she had wished to divert the investigations of the Law from another person. It was quite clear that Mme. Steinheil was trying to escape the interview. Answering our questions she said she detested her husband, that they 'were poor,' that they 'had nothing.' *I started raising false issues to get at the truth.* . . . Then she declared that the criminal was Salvator (one of M. Steinheil's

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models). She retracted her words and said: 'No, I am losing my head. It is not Salvator, it is his brother.' Then she stated that she was fond of a man, M. Bdl., and that all she had done of late was in order to prove to him that she was still actively pursuing the affair.

"We asked her again why she had directed suspicion against Rémy Couillard. She replied: 'I have always had suspicions of him.' We told her that, in any case, she knew what had taken place on the night of May 30th–31st, that she knew who was the real criminal. And both M. de Labruyère and I declared to her that: 'We will not go until you tell us the name.' She exclaimed: 'I cannot tell you his name, because there is some one whom it would kill.' We asked her: 'Who? His wife? a sister?' She said: 'No, his mother . . . his mother would die of grief or would kill herself.'

"We asked her whether she referred to some one in the *entourage*, and finally she said: 'It is Alexandre Wolff, Mariette's son.' Then she begged us to let Wolff know very quickly so that he might get away. We asked her if Mariette knew about all this, and she replied: 'Oh! Mariette is there, watching us! She must not know anything. Yes, Mariette has known everything since . . . who knows how long? . . . Mariette will now probably turn against me.' Then narrating the crime, she told us: 'I did not ask Wolff to come. He came to steal the money. . . . There were no jewels. He terrorised me. He told me that if I spoke, he could assert that I had summoned him so that he might rid me of my husband.' She added that since then and even recently Alexandre Wolff had threatened to kill her and her daughter.

"I asked her if she were very sure that she was not again accusing an innocent person, if she spoke the truth, and she replied: 'Oh! the moment is too tragic for me not to tell the truth.' She added: 'My life is over,' and she talked about killing herself. I gave her the advice not to do such a thing, and to go in the morning and talk to the examining magistrate, and tell him the whole truth.

"At a certain moment, she rose. . . . She walked like an automaton, and her arms raised . . .

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"M. de Labruyère and I left at about 12.50 A.M. expecting her to tell the whole truth in the morning, and expressing our sympathy with her.

"She was then very much depressed.

"During the whole evening we were alone with Mme. Steinheil. The two Chabriers and Mme. Steinheil's daughter were in a room near by." . . .

(*Signed*) ANDRÉ.
SIMON (*Clerk*).
HUTIN.

(*Dossier* Cote 3260)

M. Barby, of the *Matin*, remained with Marthe and the Chabriers, evidently to prevent any one from coming to my assistance. The plans of these men were well laid.

The evidence given on December 29, 1908, by M. Barby to M. André runs as follows:

"At about 8.30 P.M., on November 25, I arrived at the house in the Impasse Ronsin. I found Mme. Steinheil very depressed. She complained about Souloy, the jeweller, saying he owed a great deal to her and that she could not understand why he had made 'such a statement.' At 9.30 M. Hutin arrived, soon followed by M. de Labruyère. Between them and Mme. Steinheil a long conversation took place in the sitting-room, whilst I remained in the *next* room with the Chabriers and Mlle. Marthe Steinheil.

"Several times M. de Labruyère came to talk to me, and briefly told me what was going on. Towards midnight, he came and said: 'Mme. Steinheil is confessing to us.'

"M. de Labruyère and M. Hutin went away at about 1 A.M. As they went, M. de Labruyère rapidly explained the confession made by Mme. Steinheil. . . . He recommended me to remain, and, as far as I could, prevent Mme. Steinheil from talking with Mariette Wolff and check any act of violence on the part of Mariette against Mme. Steinheil.

"After the two men had gone, I remained about half an hour in the dining-room with Mme. Steinheil. She was then

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models). She retracted her words and said: 'No, I am losing my head. It is not Salvator, it is his brother.' Then she stated that she was fond of a man, M. Bdl., and that all she had done of late was in order to prove to him that she was still actively pursuing the affair.

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"After the two men had gone, I remained about half an hour in the dining-room with Mme. Steinheil. She was then

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very much depressed. She wept, wrung her hands, and cried: 'My poor mother! How I wished I had died like her!'

"*She said to me: 'What have I been doing? What have I confessed? What is going to happen to me?*' . . .

". . . At a certain moment, she said: 'I am not sure that Alexandre Wolff acted alone, for I heard noises in the hall and on the staircase. . . . I have only seen him.' . . .

"Then she added: 'I shan't be able to prove what I have said about Wolff. . . . I must die. . . .'

"She asked me to kill her. She besought me to give her the means of killing herself, she asked for strychnine and told me that if I had nothing I must go and fetch the doctor, who could surely find something for her.

"I did my best to calm her.

"The Chabriers and I pressed her to go to bed, but she would not. Then we thought of drinking tea. To prevent Mariette from talking to Mme. Steinheil, I told her to pass the tray through one of the hall windows. She did so, but I saw her exchange a long look with Mme. Steinheil. That look lasted about one minute. Mariette muttered: 'What's the matter?' Mme. Steinheil was dumb. Mariette then walked round and entered the dining-room. She threw herself into Mme. Steinheil's arms . . . I did not hear them say anything and then Mariette went away. . . .

"Mme. Steinheil told us that she intended calling on the judge in the morning. She was quiet now, and asked M. Chabrier to go and warn her counsel, Maître Aubin, whilst she went to M. Leydet. She spoke in a calm, precise way. At last, she consented to go to bed.

"Afterwards she asked for Mariette. She said, 'I can't go without seeing Mariette; if I did she would guess something.' Mariette came. M. Chabrier and I were in the room, a few yards from the bed.

"The two women spoke in whispers. We could not hear anything. The scene lasted two or three minutes. When I tried to put an end to it, Mariette, who is usually polite to me, exclaimed angrily: 'Leave me alone' (*Foutez-moi la paix*).

"At last Mariette went back to her lodge.

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"I tried to make Mme. Steinheil repeat what she had said to Mariette, and after much hesitation she told me she had asked Mariette: 'If they arrest me, and the truth is discovered, what will you do?' and that Mariette had replied: 'I'll deny everything.'

"After a while—Mme. Chabrier was then upstairs, and I was in the dining-room with M. Chabrier—we heard a door being opened on the ground floor, and M. Chabrier saw that 'Champagne'—the dog—was in the garden. We thought that Mariette had gone to warn her son. Mme. Chabrier (who had come down) was exceedingly alarmed, and said that Alexandre Wolff would perhaps come and kill them. M. Chabrier then went upstairs to fetch a revolver. The dog was still in the garden. Following my advice, M. Chabrier went to fill a decanter with water in the kitchen, to see whether Mariette was in her lodge. When he returned, he said she was there.

"Soon afterwards Mariette came to us in the dining-room. At that very moment Mme. Steinheil called to me from her room. I went to her, and she again besought me to kill her, because she would be unable to prove what she had said about Alexandre Wolff. She again asked me to give her strychnine, and to fetch the doctor.

"Meanwhile, Mariette had returned to her lodge. Mme. Chabrier went there, and when she returned she told us: 'I found Mariette with a revolver in her hand, and she said, "That's my last hope."' Mme. Chabrier added that Mariette had declared that she had already tried to commit suicide with the gas-pipe, and that she had let the dog into the garden so that it should not be asphyxiated. . . . That had happened at about the time when M. Chabrier had gone to fetch the water.

"Mme. Chabrier fetched Mariette. The latter was tottering, and her face was livid.

"Addressing herself to me, Mariette said: 'Tell me what has happened. I prefer anything rather than to be like this in the dark.' We told her that there was nothing the matter, and spoke some kind words to her.

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"It was then about 4 A.M.

"At that time, M. Bourse, a colleague of mine on the staff of the *Matin*, arrived.

"He said to M. Chabrier: 'The newspapers are about to appear and render public Mme. Steinheil's confession. The crowd, since yesterday, is very hostile; it is to be feared that the mob may proceed to acts of violence against Mme. Steinheil and those who live in this house. Mme. Steinheil had better leave the place and go to some friends or to a hotel to await the time when she can see M. Leydet.

"M. Chabrier agreed to this but remarked that it would be better to go straight to the *Sûreté*. M. Chabrier told Mme. Steinheil and Mlle. Marthe this, and both accepted the suggestion.

"Mme. Steinheil prepared to start. She was then quite calm, so calm that she gave instructions about the house, said that the dog should be looked after and that the covers should be put on the furniture. Then she handed a hundred franc note to Mme. Chabrier 'for the household.'

"Towards 4.15 A.M. she drove away with her daughter and M. Chabrier. She had kissed every one, even Mariette, and had been continually repeating: 'Courage, have courage' or some similar words.

"M. Bourse and I remained with Mme. Chabrier at her husband's request. Mariette joined us and again questioned us to find out what had happened. I merely replied: 'We have advised Mme. Steinheil to go and spend a few days with some friends of hers, in order to avoid the hostility of the crowd.' "

(Signed) BARBY.
SIMON.
ANDRÉ.

(*Dossier* Cote 3282)

Mme. Chabrier, called upon to give evidence before M. André on December 16th, 1908, made statements which were almost the same as those made by M. Barby. Her evidence, however, contained a few additional remarks:

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"After the departure of the two journalists, M. Barby remained with us. Mme. Steinheil drank some tea. She walked like an automaton. Her eyes were haggard and gazed into space. I had never seen her in such a state. She did not speak. Marthe and I took her to her room and undressed her. . . . *At* 3.30 A.M., M. Bourse of the *Matin* arrived in an automobile. . . . My husband and I went and told Mme. Steinheil that she should get up and go. . . . She said 'yes.' My husband added that he was going to take her to the *Sûreté* to M. Hamard. . . . She answered: 'Yes, I will feel safer there than anywhere else.'" . . .

(*Dossier* Cote 3251)

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CHAPTER XXI

MY ARREST

To resume my own recital.

Marthe rested in my arms during the hour of sleep which we snatched out of the mad turmoil of that night. When I was awakened everything came back to me. It was decided that I should go to M. Hamard, and I kept repeating to myself: "I must tell him exactly what the journalists told me, I must not change a word. Otherwise, they have said, I shall be lost and Marthe too." I had suffered so much that I was numb, and had hardly any feeling in my body. I was calm. Nothing mattered. . . . Still I had one fear, the terrible mob outside, the mob that wanted to kill us all, to set fire to the house. I kissed Mme. Chabrier and gave her some money to look after Marthe, in case anything happened to me. . . . I had been told so many times during the night that I should be arrested! . . . I said to Mariette: "Now, you must speak the truth . . ." She replied: "I will deny everything." . . . The fresh air in the garden did me good. When I stepped out into the Impasse with Marthe and M. Chabrier, I was surprised to see that no one was there, not even a policeman! Those two men had lied then. . . . A taxi from the *Matin* was waiting outside the gate.

"Where are we going?" the driver asked.

"To the *Sûreté*," I replied.

M. Hamard was not yet up, of course. It was then about 4.20. . . . We waited awhile; then he arrived, hastily dressed, his hair unbrushed, wearing a night-shirt under his coat, and a pair of black slippers. Utter bewilderment was written on his face.

Some one told me: "M. Hamard is going to write down everything you say."

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I said, or rather repeated, everything I had been made to say during the night: no men in black gowns; no stolen jewels; M. Bdl., my friend; Alexandre Wolff, the murderer.

M. Hamard said to me: "You and Wolff will be confronted."

M. Leydet arrived. "You have made a laughing-stock of me," he exclaimed; "why did you not tell me the truth?" . . . I said: "Forgive me."

Why did he weep? . . . I wondered, and said to myself: "If he had had greater tenacity, if he had searched with greater diligence, he would have found the three men and the woman . . ."

Then Maître Aubin arrived. "What do I hear!" he exclaimed wildly. "You have accused Wolff!"

Wolff was then brought in. (He had been arrested at seven in the morning.) My declaration was read to him. He turned pale with anger and vehemently denied everything. I certainly had serious suspicions against Wolff, but, of course, my declaration, the new story of the crime, had been directly inspired by the anonymous letters and also by the two journalists, who had told me to "drop" the men in the black gowns and the stolen jewels—and to find something else. I did not know what to say, and thought that the only thing to do was to repeat the so-called "Confession" I had made during the night.

Mariette was present, and she spoke of her devotion to me. Wolff now explained his movements on the night of May 30th. He had sold a mare in the morning, and taken her to the Eastern Station in the afternoon. He had had a few "drinks" with the buyer, dined with his partner, and spent the evening with him in a café. The two men parted at 11.30 P.M. On the way home Wolff met a friend or two and had other "drinks," and went to bed at 1.30 or 2 A.M. On the 31st, he had sold a horse in a small place outside Paris, and had not heard of the murder until June 1st.

When first interrogated by M. Hamard—M. Leydet being present—I had firmly declared before Mariette: "It is your son Alexandre, whom I saw enter my room on the night of the crime. He gagged and bound me . . ." and now, after

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Wolff's explanations, I repeated: "It was Wolff who came into my room . . . *Or else it was some one whose figure and face are just like his.*"

Later in the day, before M. Leydet and in the presence of Wolff, I said: "I can say nothing more than what I have said to you . . . I have no material proofs to corroborate my statements," and I added: "Alexandre, since you were in my room on the night of the crime, *you might help us to discover the criminal.*" And I apologised to him.

I quote these three different statements of mine, made at intervals, on that 26th day of November, from the *Dossier*, Cote 65 and Cote 70.

All day long questions were asked me and confrontations took place . . . And I had had less than two hours rest during the past five days.

Wolff called me a "mad and hysterical woman . . ." He was not far from the truth, alas. But I remembered the warning, "This time don't change a word of what you have told us, or else you and Marthe are lost."

I thought: If I am arrested, Wolff and Couillard are arrested too. And since they know something, they will speak. Couillard has already made a few revelations. Now it will be Wolff's turn. The whole truth will come out. I did not know that that very day Couillard would be released and that Wolff was only in custody for a few hours.

Maître Aubin once or twice took me to another room and entreated me not to accuse Wolff . . . Then both he and M. Hamard besought me to reflect: "You have lost your reason," they said. "Retract your accusation against Wolff . . ." They spoke kindly, and I thought: "They want to arrange matters to stop this whole affair, because of the political mystery in it. But I must resist to the end. The three men and the woman must be found. I have gone too far, suffered too much, to give up the fight and the search."

Some one told me: "If you persist in your accusations, they will arrest both you and your daughter!"

My poor Marthe again. Journalists, the Law . . . everybody thought to silence me by making use of my love for my

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child! I was indignant. Let them arrest me! What did it matter! What did anything matter so long as the murderers were sought—and found! She was innocent; they could but recognise that at once. And as for me, what had I done? I had accused Couillard and placed a pearl in his pocket-book to have him arrested, to make him say what he knew . . . I deserved to be punished for that. But since I had been urged in every conceivable way to denounce the valet, they would understand and soon forgive me. . . . Besides, he and Wolff would perhaps speak. The letters were unanimous: they knew—and the truth would at last be revealed.

And now Marthe arrived, accompanied by M. Chabrier. How pale she was! How tear-stained and frightened her dear eyes! She sank on my breast, clutched my arms, and sobbed. "Mother, mother," she cried, "they want to put us in prison. . . . Can nothing be done? Say everything you know, if you know everything!" . . .

Then M. Grandjean, *Substitut* of the *Procureur*, tore my daughter away from me and said: "Ah! you love your daughter! Well, we shall make her suffer in order to make you talk!"

Since then, my daughter has told me that during the afternoon of that dreadful day the same M. Grandjean had threatened to arrest her, and also M. Chabrier, who had burst into tears.

From 4.30 A.M. till 7 P.M., with brief intervals, and one hour (2 P.M.) during which I was allowed to talk with Marthe and have some tea, I was subjected to endless examinations, in M. Hamard's *Cabinet*, by him, and by M. Grandjean and M. Leydet.

It was towards 5 P.M. when it was decided that I should be arrested. But, before that, I was once more interrogated by M. Leydet. We went from the *Sûreté* to the Palace of Justice, through a long chain of staircases and passages. I was accompanied by inspectors, the judge, the chief of the *Sûreté*, Maître Aubin, his two secretaries, and others. We hurried along, for there were swarms of journalists everywhere, whom the inspectors had to repel.

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Alexandre Wolff, brought in by two municipal guards, was again confronted with me, and it was then that I ceased to accuse him as firmly as before, and asked him to "help me discover the murderer."

"Well, it was time you spoke like that," Wolff exclaimed. "I wasn't going to be guillotined just to please you!"

Many things were said to me or before me; but I did not hear them. I had no longer the strength or will to hear, or the power to reason. . . .

M. Leydet said to me: "You are arrested." I did not mind at all. I could not understand the terrible meaning of those three words.

I left the room. Maître Aubin was outside, in the corridor, with Marthe. I saw that she was crying.

"Are you arrested too?" I asked her.

"No, no," said my counsel. "She is free."

I dried Marthe's tears, and said to her (she told me all this afterwards, when she visited me in prison, and that is how I am able to complete this narrative): "You must not weep. You know very well I am not the only one. . . . Marie Antoinette was arrested, and others . . ."

My daughter embraced me and we parted. She has told me that I smiled, and that my eyes were no longer like "living" eyes.

I followed Maître Aubin back to the *Sûreté*, where we entered the *Cabinet* of M. Hamard, and my counsel has told me since that I sat down quietly and waited. M. Hamard, it appears, asked me whether I would like to eat something. It was past nine o'clock then. "Oh, yes," I replied. "Some ham and tea, please." When the tray was brought in, I settled down before a little table, and said to the Chief of the *Sûreté*, "Surely you are not going to let me eat by myself? Won't you have some tea with me?" M. Hamard said gently, "I have too much to do . . ."

Then I heard some one sob behind me. It was an inspector, a good man, who for months had done all he could to help me trace the murderers of my husband and my mother.

When I had finished eating, M. Hamard said, "Madame, it is time to go now. *Bon courage!* . . ."

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My counsel's last words were, "In a week's time you will be back in your daughter's arms."

I went down the staircase between the inspectors, whom I knew so well.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"To Saint-Lazare."

I had never heard of Saint-Lazare before. I only knew of the station of that name. I supposed they referred to a kind of home for women, a kind of infirmary. We entered a taxi and drove away. We passed by the Châtelet. I recognised it. . . . The inspectors looked very sad. They spoke kind words to me. . . .

"Is it very far, Saint-Lazare?" I asked.

I looked through the window. Paris seemed a new, a different city . . .

We reached Saint-Lazare. I glanced at the big building; it reminded me of a convent . . . And there were so many doors. We passed through a yard, a passage. Then we came to a small room.

"Your name," said some one.

"Why?"

"You must write it, here . . ."

"Yes, Madame," said one of the inspectors, kindly. "Write your name, your age . . ."

A bell rang. The inspectors, deeply moved, said, "We must bid you good-bye, Madame . . ."

They went as far as a door with me. I shook hands with them and said, "Courage, courage; we shall all know the truth soon."

Then I was taken to another room. There was green furniture in it; the ceiling was low. It was not a beautiful room, but it was most comfortable. I saw a small man of about forty-five, with a strong face, blue eyes, fair hair, and a pointed beard, and some one said, "That is *Monsieur le Directeur*."

"So it is you who are putting me here?" . . . I said. "That is a nice old arm-chair . . ." I was convinced that I should be given a room like this one.

The director spoke softly, in gentle tones. He rang a bell.

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A *gardien* came with a "sister." She wore a black dress, and a great white cornette encircled her kind, strong face. She looked about fifty. Afterwards I learned her name; Sœur Léonide, and it was one of the names I learned at Saint-Lazare which I shall never forget and which I bless day after day.

She has since told me that the first words I said to her, when she entered the director's room, were: "It is I, *ma sœur;* it is strange, is it not, that it should be I?" . . .

I followed her, I began to be surprised, almost alarmed. She took me through a long, long passage. At the end, there was a bed in an angle. A man was there, he took up some large keys, and opened the door. The sister took me by the hand and said: "It is a little dark . . ."

"How ugly and damp it is here, *ma sœur*" . . . I held the bannister: "It reminds me," I said, "of those in the old houses at Montbéliard, near my dear Beaucourt."

We came to another door. There I saw a sister sitting at a small desk in a room where the windows had big iron bars. I felt frightened. We went down another long passage, and came to a high gate which the sister opened.

"Where are we going, *ma sœur?* Everything is so dirty and dark. Are we going the right way?"

"Yes. You must come and fetch your sheets." She shut the gate behind her, and I noticed for the first time a bunch of large heavy keys hanging at her waist.

She opened the door with one of the keys and said: "I will choose some nice sheets . . . you must be very tired."

"Oh no, *ma sœur*, I am not tired . . . I hope Marthe is not unhappy. I am glad she did not come here with me . . ."

The sister muttered: "Hush! You must not talk here . . . Take these sheets."

I looked at them. I had seen soldiers' sheets, but these were much coarser.

The sister looked at me and said: "Yes . . . you are not used to them . . ."

I carried the sheets, and followed the sister along a filthy, evil-smelling corridor.

"Where are you going after this?" I asked.

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"My poor child, I am taking you to your cell."

Another sister arrived, turned a big key in a lock twice, and drew a bolt. A heavy door was opened before me. The sister held a lantern, and I was told to go in.

I saw two women's faces looking at me from two little beds against the black walls, two barred windows, and three other beds that were empty.

"Make your bed, there . . ."

The foot of "my" bed touched that of a bed in which I saw a dark, pale, fierce-looking woman, the sight of whom made me shiver. . . .

There was a tiny unlighted stove with three legs and a long chimney in the middle of the cell. The floor was made of slabs. Many were missing, most of them were broken, and there was dirty water in the holes. It was very cold.

One of the sisters pointed to a shelf above the bed and said: "You can put your things there. . . . Give me your hat, your hatpins, your gloves. You are only entitled to keep your dress."

I lay down, almost entirely dressed, on the bed. I heard a clock strike midnight. I still wondered where I was. This is not an infirmary, I thought. . . . And why am I not alone in a room? . . . The sisters went silently away. I heard the key turned in the lock, the bolt pushed back. The women at once started eagerly talking to me . . . I could not understand them. I thought of Marthe. I cried, cried . . . and then fell, suddenly, into the great void of a sleep almost as deep as death.

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CHAPTER XXII

THE THREE CELLS

I AWOKE the next morning—in a cell. The women were still there. I felt as if I had been beaten all over my body and my head. At first I did not realise where I was, or what I was doing there. . . . I saw the slabs of the floor, the dirt, the door with the peep-hole, through which, after lifting a small wooden shutter, people from the outside could see what was going on in the cell, the iron bedstead with the rough straw mattresses, the pillow filled with dried sea-weed, and the sheets made of some yellowish material that looked like sail-cloth. I saw the boards fastened into the wall above each bed, the small stove, the heap of coal in a corner, a few yellowish earthenware bowls and jugs, and blunt knives on a rickety table. I saw the walls covered with tar, vermin crawling about the cracks and hollows in the slabs, around the little puddles of muddy, evil-smelling water, the rough-hewn, uneven joists of the dark ceiling, from which hung thick webs. (Saint-Lazare, I heard afterwards, is one of the oldest and most dilapidated prisons in France.) I saw the two windows, with their heavy iron bars, and thick wire-gauze—through which, later on, I found it so difficult to give some of my bread to the scores of sparrows and pigeons which nest in the old roofs of Saint-Lazare—and I knew that I was a prisoner.

But what did it matter! In less than a week everything would be arranged and definitely settled, the real murderers would be arrested, and I would be once more with my daughter! Meanwhile, it was horrible to be here, to be in prison! I thought of Marthe, of my father . . . and I cried.

The women watched me eagerly. They addressed me by my name. . . . How did they know who I was?

"Oh!" said one, "we know all we want. Newspapers are

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not allowed here, but when you have a nice counsel, he hands some to you secretly. . . . Besides, new batches of women arrive every day, women who have just been arrested. . . . They know the latest news, and when they walk round the yard you can hear them talk."

The noise of steps outside, of the key being turned twice, and of the bolts being drawn—a noise which I was to hear so many times a day during a whole year, but which always jarred painfully on my nerves—interrupted the woman's explanations.

The man with the fair, pointed beard and the stern expression whom I had seen on my arrival at Saint-Lazare, entered, followed by the Sister who had given me the sheets, and whom I will henceforth call by her name, Sister Léonide. The two women jumped up and said: "Good morning, *Monsieur le Directeur.*"

He turned to me, and in a matter-of-fact tone asked: "Are you satisfied? Is there anything you want, Madame?"

"Oh, yes! . . . I want to see my daughter."

He made no answer to that, but said: "Your counsel will no doubt come to see you to-day," and walked away.

"How stupid of you," said one of the women to me; "you might have obtained anything. For the Director to call on you like that, early in the morning, it must be a political crime." (This remark amazed me.) "You should have asked for another stove, this one draws badly, or for an extra blanket. . . ." And both started telling me what I should ask for the next time the Director came, so that our cell should be comfortable.

The door opened again. A young Sister, with a healthy glow on her round cheeks, came in.

"What do you want to-day, Madame?" she asked.

I could not understand. "She is Sister Ange," I was told; "she is the Canteen Sister." Still I did not understand.

One of the women explained: "Sister Ange fetches what the prisoner orders at the canteen. . . . You can ask for bread, for a pennyworth of milk, or two pennyworth of coffee —anything."

"What shall I prepare the coffee in?" I asked.

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The name of the other was Rosselli. She was much younger and kinder-looking, and had blue eyes and light brown hair. She had been accused of fraud, and was awaiting her trial. (I may add that three weeks afterwards she was sentenced to one year's imprisonment, but was almost immediately released.) At the end of December the appeal of Alba Ghirelli was heard, and she, too, was released.—I mention these facts because, as the reader will realise a little later, they have an important and pitiful connection with my own case.

A gong rang three times. Ghirelli and Rosselli exclaimed: "That's Sister Léonide. . . . She is in charge of the 'reserved' cells" (*pistoles*).

"What are they?" I asked.

They laughed again. "Why, this is a reserved cell. You have to pay 7 francs 50 (six shillings) a month to be in a cell like this. They are the best to be had. In each of the others there are twelve prisoners. In these there are only five beds."

Sister Léonide came in.

"Your counsel is downstairs," she announced. "Come, please." On the way she said: "In future, you will be known as 'Number 16170,' but as it is difficult to remember, we will call you '61.' When you hear the gong strike once and you hear some one shout '61,' that will mean that you are wanted; then I, or another sister, will open the door of your cell and take you to your counsel, or to the Director. . . ."

She spoke very firmly, but there was a glow of warmth and kindness in her eyes.

"*Ma Sœur*," I said, "must I remain with those women? It is dreadful for me. Can't I be alone in a cell?"

"My poor child," she replied, in her big, gruff voice that sounded just like that of a man, "you must not think of that. They will never leave you by yourself. It is against the rules. . . . In a fit of despondency you might. . . . Well, well, don't look so disappointed. I will talk the matter over with the Sister Superior and the Director, and see what can be done."

Sister Léonide walked near me. She was probably old, but had a very young face and rosy cheeks. . . . We went through the long passages which had frightened me the night

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before. The place was filthy and dilapidated. It looked worse than ever in the daylight. . . . Women, we met here and there, stopped to watch me, and they whispered: "That's the Steinheil woman!" My heart beat so fast that it hurt me, and I had a lump in my throat. Oh! The horror, the strain of being here. I thought of Marthe . . .

At the top of a flight of steps, Sister Léonide said: "Go down. You will come to a door. Knock and a gaoler will open it for you."

The word gaoler made me shudder. I thought: "I am a prisoner . . . a prisoner! But Couillard and Wolff are in prison too; perhaps they are not guilty, but they know something, and they will have to confess."

The gaoler bluntly asked: "Who are you?"

I remembered my lesson: "I am '61,'" I replied.

The man looked like an old soldier, with his rough, wrinkled, and tanned face, and his martial appearance. "Ah! yes" . . . he mumbled, "I know, '61.' It is your counsel who has come."

I entered the parlour. What a dreary place, dark and cold. . . . There was a huge wide table there, with chairs all round it. On one side I saw Maître Aubin, and M. Steinhardt, his secretary. The gaoler pointed out a chair to me, opposite my counsel, and said: "Sit down there."

The two counsel were very pale.

"Ah! why did you not follow my advice!" Aubin began. . . . "If only you had not written that letter to the Press, if only you had not started the case again! . . ." Every sentence began with the word "if."

"Have Couillard and Wolff spoken? Is the truth discovered yet?" I asked.

"Spoken! . . . They are doing nothing but speaking. People carry them about shoulder high; they are the heroes of the day. The newspapers are singing their praises! . . ."

I was dumbfounded: "What do you say! . . . It is impossible. Are they not in prison?"

"They were both set free yesterday. . . ."

"Then they are going to release me too. You said I would be with Marthe in a week's time. They don't want me any

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more, do they? . . . But now we shall never know the truth! . . . When can I go away from here?"

The two men looked at each other. They hesitated. . . . I could read in their faces that some terrible news was coming.

I could not wait. . . . "What is the matter? Speak, Maître Aubin." The poor man halted, and then at last said: "You must be brave . . . You must remain here . . . Oh! why did you put that pearl in your valet's pocket-book. You don't know the anger of the Public against you . . . You would be torn to pieces if you walked through a street."

"How long shall I have to remain in prison? You said a week. Will it be two weeks? Three weeks?" . . .

"I don't know . . ."

"What! A whole month?"

"More."

"Surely not! Two months? . . . Three whole months?"

"I don't know. I swear to you that I don't know. I would rather tell you the worst at once than slowly torture you, but I simply cannot. You will have to be examined by a judge; it will take a long time. Weeks, months, may elapse . . . But you longed to know the truth. . . . Well, there will be a thorough investigation now; you will know everything. I will help you . . ."

It was as though I had received a stunning blow on the head. . . . I reeled. Several weeks, several months, perhaps! . . .

My head fell forward, and I sobbed.

They made me promise to try to eat. They called the gaoler, and said "She must eat," and the man went to the canteen and fetched a plateful of boiled potatoes. . . . Maître Aubin's last words were: "We shall have to talk together, to work, a great deal . . . but you may rely upon it: the murderers will be found."

I returned to my cell. There, Ghirelli and Rosselli overwhelmed me with questions, and showed much irritation when I declined to answer. . . . I had bought from the canteen some paper and ink, and I started writing to my relatives.

The gong! Once! Then a voice shouted "Sixty One."

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It was for me. Sister Léonide entered and said: "Your daughter is here."

My daughter! . . . My God! Marthe was going to see me! I must not look so unhappy. . . . "*Ma Sœur*, tell me, can one see that I have cried?"

I was led to the Director's study. The Director was there, seated near a window. . . . Then I saw Marthe, with M. Chabrier. . . . She rushed into my arms, and for a long while, we wept and were both unable to speak. The Director, M. Pons, said: "You can only be together for a quarter of an hour."

I asked Marthe what had happened to her since the previous evening.

"After leaving you, mother, I drove home, and found there a journalist from the *Paris-Journal*, who when I had told him that I was exhausted and that he should have pity on me, shook me by my hand and went away without a word.

"At ten o'clock, three *Matin* men arrived, de Labruyère, Barby and Bourse. They were less considerate. They refused to go, and started making me all kinds of offers. One said to me: 'The *Matin* will give you 30,000 francs (£1200), will give even more than that if you will tell us all you know!' I said I knew nothing and had nothing to say. They then began to ask me questions: 'Confess it is your mother who committed the double murder! Come, confess it. You know everything; tell us the truth' . . . I grew so angry that they tried something else: 'Who is it, then?' they asked. 'M. Buisson? Mariette? Wolff? Geoffroy? Couillard, after all?' They mentioned the name of every person we know who comes to our house. . . . I was alone with de Labruyère and Barby. Bourse was in the next room keeping the Chabriers from joining me. I did not answer their idiotic questions. I repeated that I knew nothing . . . Then they grew reckless, and gave their ugly scheme away: 'Well, beware: You are going to see your mother at Saint-Lazare; we shall be waiting there, and we shall take you in a motor-car to a place in the country. We shall keep you there until you speak. You will see . . . To-morrow . . .' They went away banging the doors.

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"I have come, mother, with M. Chabrier and M. Hutin, who said he would protect me. I didn't see any one, but I wonder how I shall reach home."

At that moment some one came to say that there was a great crowd outside, that the police were powerless, that he didn't see how they would get Mlle. Steinheil away.

The prison-treasurer (*économe*), who was present, said: "She will have to leave by the door through which she came. There is no other way out."

"You don't want this child to be mobbed, do you?" said the Director; and he gave some instructions.

(I heard afterwards that there had been a serious altercation, passing from words to blows, between M. Hutin and M. Barby of the *Matin*, because the former's taxi had been allowed to enter the prison, to the unspeakable rage of the latter, who had the *Matin* car in readiness, and hoped to kidnap Marthe. M. Hutin's taxi, with my daughter in it, was taken through various courtyards inside the prison to the alley leading to the so-called *porte des condamnés* (the door through which prisoners sentenced to death were taken to the guillotine). The old gate had not been opened for a long time, and it was difficult to open it; but at last it was thrown open, and the taxi, carrying Marthe, M. Chabrier, and M. Hutin, sped out of the prison into the square. . . . The crowd was surging outside the main entrance. When they saw the taxi, and realised that Marthe was in it, it was too late. Marthe reached the Impasse Ronsin safely, thanks to M. Hutin, whom, when I heard of his kindness to my daughter, I almost forgave his conduct towards me on the so-called "Night of the Confession.")

From that day the *Matin* hardly ever troubled my daughter.

I thanked the Director for what he had done for my child, and also for having allowed me to see her, not in the parlour, but in his study.

"Yes," he said, in his usual earnest manner, "you ought to be satisfied. Think of the unfortunate women here who have to see their children, not even in the parlour across a table, but through two gates, between which a gaoler is sitting! . . .

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By the way, the doctor will see you often, and you must tell him if you are ill. There are remedies in our dispensary."

I always found M. Pons a very strict but admirably just director.

I was led back to my cell; I could hardly walk and when I reached it I sank on my bed.

The thought of having to remain in prison three months perhaps, drove me mad. Ghirelli and Rosselli spoke to me. They wanted to know what had happened. . . . Poor women! News, whatever it is, however sad, breaks the monotony of life in a prison cell. . . . But I was more dead than alive, and remained on my bed, crying and thinking of Marthe.

Towards the evening some one came to tell me that a pastor had come to see me. I put on my jacket. Outside the Boulevard des Pistoles—"the boulevard of the cells"—a hand touched my arm, and a kind voice said: "My poor friend. I don't know you, but I know your family. I have read the newspapers, I heard you were here. . . . I am Pastor Arboux. I visit regularly the Protestant prisoners here and in other prisons. I have done so for the past twenty years. . . . How you must have suffered. Come with me! we will talk together, and we will pray."

I followed him up a few steps to a small chapel which contained a few chairs, a kind of desk with a Bible on it. I looked at the pastor, and found him a tall, strong man of about sixty, with a small grey beard, large kind eyes and refined features.

"You have seen your daughter," said M. Arboux. "That must have given you much courage. What a brave little girl she must be. . . . I hope you have a good counsel." . . . Then he asked me a few questions. I answered them, and he concluded: "I feel you are innocent. I have always thought so."

"Innocent of what?" I said. . . . "I am not innocent; don't you know that I put the pearl in Couillard's pocket-book?"

"The pearl? The pearl? . . ." He looked almost frightened . . . "The pearl? You mean to say your counsel has told you that you are here on account of that?"

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"No, Maître Aubin has told me nothing. He only said that I would be kept here for two or three months; he didn't know."

Deeply affected, M. Arboux then said: "Let us pray! Kneel down, my poor woman!"

He knelt beside me and he prayed: "Oh God, Thou who hast allowed my sister here to lose her reason and do an act of injustice, forgive her, and give her the courage to bear everything, even the awful truth. . . ."

He stopped, and I waited for some dreadful revelation. . . .

The pastor, making a great effort, then added in a broken voice: "Give her the strength to hear . . . that she is accused of a terrible crime."

"A crime! What crime! . . ." I seized his hands . . . "tell me everything . . . I am accused of having . . ."

"Yes, of having . . ."

I interrupted him: "Don't say it! Good God! . . ." And then I said it myself: "They believe I have strangled my mother and my husband. . . ." And I fell forward, rocking and moaning in my grief and horror.

The pastor lifted me on to a chair: "Yes . . . that is why I came here to-night. I half thought that you might not know, and I thought you would suffer a little less if it were an old pastor who broke the awful news to you. . . . I have witnessed so much misery."

After a long while, when there were no more tears left to shed, he again tried to comfort me: "Be brave, perhaps the criminals will be found. There will be a thorough, a searching *Instruction*. The truth will out, sooner or later. . . . It will be a terrible trial to you, to be in this prison, awaiting the decision of the judges, but you must not lose heart. You must expiate past faults. . . . Try to forget the brilliant world where you have lived all these years. . . . Every week I will come to you, and we will pray to Him who has all powers. Believe me: it is not human beings who will give you the courage to remain here and to live, and to hope."

He took the Bible on the desk, placed it in my hands, saying: "Here is the old, old book; it has consoled the worst

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afflicted. I will see you every week, as often as my other duties will allow."

Pastor Arboux kept his promise, in a sublime manner. He gave me the courage to live, and reconciled me to this world. During the endless year of mental and physical agony, he came to see me twice a week, every Thursday and every Sunday, and remained each time at least one hour. He came even when he was ill or overwhelmed with work. During the summer of 1909, he took a well-earned three weeks' holiday, but even then, he came to Paris to give me the consolation which he knew I so sorely needed.

M. Arboux asked me: "What sort of women are those two in your cell?"

"It is terrible for me to be with them; they quarrel constantly, and they keep asking me questions. I refuse to speak to them, but sometimes, they are so pressing that I reply, but I am so ill, so tired, so miserable . . ."

"Try not to reply at all," said M. Arboux. "I will talk to the Director."

In spite of the pastor's kind words, I spent the night weeping and lamenting. I, Marguerite Steinheil-Japy, to be accused of murder, accused of having strangled my husband and my mother! How could such a monstrous charge have been brought against me! It was maddening . . .

The next day, Saturday, November 26th—no one came to see me, and the day seemed endless.

Another sleepless night followed, and then another day began, a Sunday! Seated on my bed, I wept bitterly. The two women again asked me questions, but during the afternoon, Sister Léonide entered and said to me: "Take your things. You are going into another cell." Later, in January, when the *Matin* published statements made by Ghirelli and Rosselli concerning a "full confession" which I was supposed to have made in their cell, the Director of the Saint-Lazare prison, sent a report to Judge André, in which he says, concerning my change of cell:

". . . That Mme. Steinheil was taken from cell No. 15, and placed in cell No. 11. . . . On Sunday November 29th,

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1908, in the afternoon, because of a paragraph in the *Matin* of November 28th, which gave the number of Mme. Steinheil's cell and the names of her companions. The indiscretion, it appears from the newspapers, was made by Maître Camille Dreyfus, counsel of the prisoner called Rosselli."

(*Dossier* Cote 3021)

Sœur Léonide led me to a cell much larger and lighter than the other, but in the same dirty dilapidated state. It contained seven beds, and had two windows, not only heavily barred, but also fitted with iron trellis-work. The windows were of ground glass, so that it was impossible to see outside, except when they were open. One had to listen to the rain and to "guess" if the sun shone, when they were shut.

I sank on to an old chair. Sœur Léonide comforted me, and, trying to be cheerful, "Do you know that everybody is spoiling you!" she said. "Look at this fine, big cell, and you will be almost alone here."

She opened one of the windows. It was raining, and what I could see of the sky, through the bars and the trellis, was dull and grey. The sister pointed to the courtyard below: "Look," she said; "there are a few trees there. In the centre of the yard you can see the basin where the prisoners do their washing. And look at all the pigeons on the roofs. During the summer it is very nice here, you will see . . ."

I looked at the good sister. She understood . . . and added hastily: "Of course, of course, you won't be here then; I was only telling you . . ."

It was very cold and I shivered. Still, to look out of the windows was a change from gazing at four black walls, and wearily, unendingly, counting the tiles at my feet.

But Sœur Léonide gently pulled me back, and closed the window: "It is not wise for you to remain there. Some of the women below might see you, and they would insult you. Everybody in the prison knows you are here."

A sister entered the cell, pushing before her a young woman of about twenty-five, down whose sunken cheeks tears were streaming.

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"She is going to be your companion," said Sœur Léonide, "she is a much nicer little woman than the others, and she is very unhappy; so, she will know how to console you."

"Why is she so unhappy? What has she done? . . ."

The girl herself replied. "I am here because I tried to steal three blouses from a shop. I wanted to make myself beautiful for my sweetheart. But, Madame, what do you think they have done? They have given me four months! Four months in prison, for three blouses. I shall never live here four months, and 'he' will have gone."

Poor girl! She was small and delicate; she had big brown eyes. She reminded me a little of Marthe.

"What is your name?" I asked her.

"Firmin."

"Well, Firmin, we must try to comfort each other."

Sister Léonide left us together. The dreadful noise of the key and bolt, again.

Firmin was sobbing, and, seeing her in that state, I forgot my grief, for a while . . . She told me all the horrible things the other women-prisoners said among themselves, and she said: "I am so thankful to M. Desmoulin for having sent me to this cell."

"Who is M. Desmoulin?" I asked.

"He is a man who visits prisoners, but not a priest or a pastor . . . They say he is a painter . . . He goes about the prison as he pleases. He is here to-day. I'd have died long ago, if it had not been for him. Ah! think of it, I am in prison! What will my parents say? They don't know anything yet . . ." And she burst out sobbing. Poor Firmin!

We heard a noise, voices, and then a gentleman came in, fairly tall, with a grey beard and moustache, and the appearance of an artist. He must have been about fifty-five.

He chatted with Firmin for a short while, near the door. I heard him say: "You must do all you can for her." He looked in my direction and said: "Have courage, Madame," then went away.

"That was M. Desmoulin," said Firmin.

Night fell early.

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"I am going to light the fire," said my companion. "And then, the Sister told me I was to make you eat something."

Firmin lit the fire, helped me to undress, for I was terribly weak, put me to bed and forced me to swallow some milk.

But I could not sleep. Firmin then exclaimed, "I have a bit of candle!"

"Are there no lamps, then?"

"No, Madame, but I have a candle. I bought it. I have no money, but I sew, I work to make money. You must sew all day to earn very little, and of course, to work at night you need a candle, don't you!"

She started to sew, near my bed, and I helped her. . . . Then suddenly, I heard the masculine voice of Sister Léonide shouting: "Will you be quiet, all of you? I shall call the warders . . . I tell you she is not here!"

Heavy objects, by the score, were thrown against the door of my cell; and the most abominable insults were hurled at me. There rose hysterical screams of "Murderess! assassin! The guillotine is too good for you! We know you are there! Death to you! The guillotine!"

Firmin held both my hands and trembled like a leaf. "It is dreadful, Madame, don't listen!"

"What are they throwing at the door?"

"Their wooden shoes, and anything they can lay their hands on, I suppose. . . ."

Then, abruptly, the noise outside the door ceased, but it started again almost immediately, behind one of the walls, where apparently a whole gang of prisoners were lodged. For a while, they shouted obscenities, and the vilest insults were once more hurled at me: "Murderess! You strangled your own mother, you killed your own husband . . . If we had you here, we would gouge your eyes out, tear you to shreds, you assassin!" . . .

And all the time those demons hit the wall and tried to smash it, piece by piece.

Cold perspiration bathed my temples. Firmin was livid, and fell near me, on my bed. We held each other's hands. Firmin said: "Don't pay any attention, Madame. I have

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heard much worse than that. Here, upstairs, they are almost quiet; the women are awaiting their trial, but downstairs, where I was, there are the condemned women. If you knew how they insulted and beat me when they heard I was going upstairs, to this cell, and when they found out, somehow, that I would be with you!"

I could hardly hear what she said, so terrific was the noise in the next cell.

Then the noise ceased . . . The Sisters were coming . . . But as soon as the round had passed, the din began afresh, and the insults and the threats were even worse than before. . . . Firmin and I, in despair, forced paper into our ears, and getting into our beds, we covered our heads not only with our blankets, but with our clothes. Still I could hear those women . . . Yet another sleepless night, yet another night of terror and agony!

The next day I heard the gong, and then a voice shouted that number "Sixty-one," to which I was already getting used. It was Marthe. For half an hour we remained together and every second new life returned to my bruised body, and hope to my aching heart. How brave the darling was, how she tried to keep back her tears so as not to make me more miserable than I already was. . . . And then my counsel came, and the pastor . . .

I begged the latter to intercede in my favour. It was impossible for me to go on like this. I felt, especially after all the shocks I had suffered during the past few months, that I would go mad if I had to go through many more such nights as the last.

"I'll see," said M. Arboux. "But it would not be fair if an exception were made in your favour."

I spent three more days and three more nights in Cell No. 11, and night and day I heard insults. When, for some cause or other, the women went through the corridor, they raised the shutter of the peep-hole in my door and let loose a torrent of abuse. Then Firmin and I would stand against the wall on one side of the door, so that we could not be seen.

At night another prisoner joined us. She was Marie Jacq,

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a Breton woman of forty, who had been recently sentenced to two years, and had before that served seven terms of imprisonment. Jacq was employed all day as a kind of charwoman; she entered the cell at 8 P.M. to sleep, and left it at 6 A.M. She seemed to have but one craving, the poor wretch—drink.

At night, since sleep was out of the question, I had no option but to think and think, and wearily through the long hours I tried to thrash out and see clearly all the details of the strange and terrible drama which had claimed two victims, and was like to soon claim a third, for I felt that life was ebbing from my limbs.

Then one morning dear Sister Léonide came and told me, "You are going to change your cell once more. I have instructions to take you to No. 12. There you will have on one side your former cell, and on the other a lumber room. You will at last be able to breathe—and sleep."

Firmin shared this new cell with me, and Jacq, who had spent the nights in Cell No. 13, then in Cell No. 11 when I was there, joined us at night in No. 12. She had instructions to assist me—and watch over me.

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CHAPTER XXIII

ALBA GHIRELLI, MARGUERITE ROSSELLI AND THE "MATIN"

JUDGE ANDRÉ'S *Instruction* began in December 1908. But before dealing with it, I wish to acquaint the reader with a series of amazing and painful incidents, in which the two prisoners Ghirelli and Rosselli, Marie Anne Jacq—whose cell I shared for two days and three nights—and M. Charles Sauerwein of the *Matin*, were the chief actors, whilst, as usual, alas, I was the powerless central figure, the victim.

Maître Aubin, my counsel, came to me on two or three occasions in a state of great consternation. His first sentence was: "What have you done?" and his last sentence, after he had explained to me the new incident, was "All that is printed in the *Matin*." So, that newspaper, thinking that it had not made me suffer enough yet, continued its virulent attacks while I was in prison!

What did those articles in the *Matin* say? Merely trifles of this kind: According to one of my fellow prisoners, I had spoken of suicide, had accused Alexandre Wolff again, declared that before placing the pearl in Couillard's pocket-book, I had first placed it in that of my "cousin" M. Chabrier (whom I called cousin though he was no relation of mine, but a cousin of my husband). I had entrusted a secret mission to the care of Ghirelli and last but not least I had confessed to having committed the murder!

These various "statements," only dramatised and adorned by the *Matin* for the sole purpose of several columns of the most sensational copy, were published at intervals during January 1909.

I will now quote part of the most damaging and most fan-

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tastic "story" published by *Le Matin*, in its issue of Sunday, January 17th, 1909 (I was in prison at the time and undergoing my *Instruction i.e.* the preliminary examination by a magistrate):

THE STEINHEIL AFFAIR

EVERYTHING

EXCEPT THE NAME OF THE ACCOMPLICE.
MADAME STEINHEIL DENOUNCES HERSELF.
"MY MOTHER . . . SHE WAS THE ALIBI."

". . . We were able to see yesterday a person who has received fresh confessions from Mme. Steinheil. At a time when, having been already in prison a few days, entangled in the meshes of proofs which the examining magistrate was weaving around her slowly but surely, the painter's widow felt irremediably lost.

"In the course of an evening when despair came upon her, and with tears and sobs and resentment, and whilst calling upon death with all her heart, Mme. Steinheil told a new version of the crime, more tragic still, SINCE THIS TIME, SHE ACCUSED HERSELF NOT ONLY AS AN ACCOMPLICE BUT AS THE GUILTY PERSON, TOGETHER WITH ANOTHER.

"SHE NAMED HER ACCOMPLICE . . .

"He is neither Rémy Couillard, nor Alexandre Wolff, nor any one whose name has so far been mentioned. This accomplice, who is one of her friends (*familiers*) our interlocutor would not assume the responsibility of giving his name to public opinion.

"If Mme. Steinheil has once more lied, it is not right that an innocent person should share with her the heavy burden of that double murder. If Mme. Steinheil has spoken the truth, *he will recognise himself.*

* * *

"All we can do to-day is to tell how, according to the painter's widow's latest disclosures, the crime was committed.

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"In tragic horror, it outdoes everything that one might, so far, have conceived.

"The double murder was decided upon, planned and premeditated.

"For the past two years, it haunted Mme. Steinheil's mind. For two years, she had, on various occasions, postponed its carrying out.

" 'I WANTED TO BE FREE,' she said.

"When, unable to restrain herself any longer, when resolved to do anything to get rid of her husband and to marry the rich man she coveted, she made her final preparations, she thought that, alone, she would not be able to carry out such a dreadful deed successfully, and confided her plans to one of her friends (*familiers*).

" 'I WANTED AN ASSISTANT, I FOUND HIM!'

"The latter accepted without too many objections. Had she not promised him a golden future?

"Then, plans were laid.

"To kill only the husband was to give herself away immediately, for everybody knew how the wife hated her husband. And the public rumour, implacable and revengeful, would at once have named the guilty person.

"An alibi was necessary.

"And coldly, resolutely, Mme. Steinheil wired to her mother, inviting her to the Impasse Ronsin.

" 'MY MOTHER, SHE WAS THE ALIBI.'

"No one would dare accuse a daughter of having killed her mother, or of having had her killed.

* * *

"Her daughter is sent to Bellevue, Mariette Wolff is sent away, Rémy Couillard had gone up to his room. Mme. Steinheil, during the evening of May 30th, remains alone with the two intended victims. She is gay; she speaks with unusual tenderness to her husband; she is very attentive to her mother.

" 'Would you like a grog, maman?' she asks Mme. Japy. Then caressingly turing to her husband: 'You will have some too, won't you? It will do you good.'

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"The grog is prepared, Mme. Steinheil adds a narcotic to it.

"With her own hand she gives the grogs.

"Mme. Japy and Mme. Steinheil (*M.* Steinheil is evidently meant, but the author of this monstrous story had evidently lost all self-control, and was unable to read it over carefully when he had written it) half an hour later went to their room (*rooms* is evidently meant) and soon an unconquerable drowsiness, a death-like sleep (*sommeil de plomb*), glued them to their bed.

"Listening keenly, Mme. Steinheil hears the gate swing softly on its hinges. It is half-past twelve; she goes down quickly, takes the key of the pantry where Couillard had placed it and half-opens the door.

"A moment later, the accomplice is in the house.

"Stealthily, Mme. Steinheil and her accomplice, who has taken off his boots, go up to the first-floor, and there in Marthe's room, they deliberate for two long hours. What was this deliberation? Mme. Steinheil, overwhelmed with shame and grief, has not yet said. . . .

"At 3 A.M. their resolution was taken. M. Steinheil and Mme. Japy were going to die.

" 'I MYSELF SLIPPED THE CORD AROUND MY HUSBAND'S NECK AND TUGGED,' said Mme. Steinheil in a hoarse voice.

" 'THEN CAME MY MOTHER'S TURN.

" 'FOR IT IS I WHO DID EVERYTHING, WHO HAD DETERMINED ON EVERYTHING. MY ACCOMPLICE MERELY ASSISTED ME IN ORGANISING THE SHAM BURGLARY WHICH FOLLOWED.

" 'IT WAS I WHO STOPPED THE CLOCK AT THE MOMENT WHEN HE CAME IN, IT WAS I WHO UPSET THE INKSTAND.

" 'THIS WHOLE TRAGEDY TOOK PLACE WITHOUT A CRY, WITHOUT A HITCH. LESS THAN TEN MINUTES SUFFICED TO CARRY OUT THE GHASTLY TASK.

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"'Then, after I had gone back to bed, my accomplice bound me.

"'The day was breaking. He left.'

"After finishing the terrifying narrative the painter's widow appeared relieved of a great burden.

"For a few minutes she seemed deep in thought, and suddenly she realised what a frightful secret she had just disclosed in a moment of despair and abandonment.

"She looked her interlocutor straight in the face.

"'*Swear to me,*' she said, '*swear on the head of your children that you will never say a word of what I have told you to-night.*'

"The oath was given, but, last night, thinking of the innocent persons whom fatal coincidences might ruin, and frightened by the terrible responsibility of keeping silent, Mme. Steinheil's interlocutor confided the secret to us.

"We have faithfully repeated the narrative of the interlocutor without naming the culprit.

"It was our duty.

"Now let the law do its duty."

Can any reader wonder, after this, that public opinion was fearfully excited against me!

I need hardly add that not one of those statements was true, but the harm they did me may well be realised! There is unfortunately no Law for Contempt of Court in France . . . And now, for the edification of the reader, and in accordance with my plan of submitting the actual evidence given by the witnesses, I will quote from the Dossier the various facts about this scandalous Ghirelli-Rosselli-Sauerwein affair. . . .

"January 19th, 1909; before us, André, examining magistrate, &c. . . . has appeared Mme. Alphonsi, born Alba Ghirelli, thirty-six years of age. . . .

Question. "We have summoned you here on account of a letter dated January 12th, 1909, which reached us two days later, of the 14th, and *which the day before had appeared in the* Matin."

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Answer. "My counsel advised me to send you the letter. Mme. Steinheil entered our cell (Ghirelli's and Rosselli's) on Thursday, November 26th, 1908, late at night. . . . She declared 'I am here because I have told untruths, but it will be nothing. It will all be arranged in a few days' time.' She went to bed. All night she seemed very restless; she cried. . . . The next morning she wrote letters. At 10.30 A.M. she said she had been maddened by the necessity of finding proof of guilt against some one, that she had first placed the pearl in her cousin's pocket-book, that she had then had a violent 'scene' with her cousin's wife . . . and that she had afterwards placed the pearl in her valet's pocket-book. . . . She also spoke about a M. Bdl. of whom she was fond. . . . During the following night, she was again very restless and cried. She sat on her bed and spoke in an incoherent way. She mentioned a certain Wolff, and I asked her whether she was sure she had recognised him. 'Yes,' she replied, 'I thought I recognised him!' . . . During the night of Saturday-Sunday, I heard her wailing. . . . She said: 'I suffer so much, I am losing my reason.' She sighed and wept. . . . On the next morning, she was very weak. At 11 A.M. she seized my hands and said: 'The only thing is suicide; that suicide must and shall take place. . . .' In the afternoon, she was taken to another cell. Before leaving, she said to me: 'Swear that we two shall meet again.' Her last words were '*a bientôt*' (so long). . . . A few days later I met her on the Boulevard of the Cells and she said: 'I miss you so much. I have asked the Director to allow us to be in the same cell. He may grant me that favour. . . .'" (!)

Question. "We ask the witness about certain newspaper articles published from January 5th, in which are related declarations attributed to the witness."

Answer. "My statements have often been misinterpreted by the Press. . . . I remember that the day of my release (Dec. 28th, 1908), Mme. Steinheil asked me to send her regards to a gentleman friend of hers . . ."

Question. "Tell us his name."

Answer. "I tore up his name and address, and I have for-

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gotten them. . . . Mme. Steinheil never asked me to take a letter to any one. . . . According to the newspapers, I took a letter to Mme. Prévost, by motor-car, in great secrecy. *That is wild romance. . . . As regards the confession of her guilt, which according to the* Matin *of Sunday January 17th, Madame Steinheil had made since her imprisonment, I know nothing whatever about it. I have not spoken a word to the* Matin *about that. . . . I have myself read the article in the* Matin *to which you refer and have found it fantastic. . . .*"

(*Dossier* Cote 3010)

Marguerite Rosselli made statements very similar to those of Alba Ghirelli, but concerning the pearl, she merely said: "She spoke about a cousin that lived in the house, she said something about that pearl, either that she had thought of putting it in the cousin's pocket-book or that she had done so. . . ." She also stated: "On January 15th or 16th, Marie Jacq, who at night shares Mme. Steinheil's cell . . . came and told me that Mme. Steinheil had spent an awful night and that she had written to the Director so that the latter might send for me and recommend me not to repeat anything of what she had said in her moments of frenzy. . . ."

(*Dossier* Cote 3011)

Marie Anne Jacq (*Dossier* Cote 3026) made statements to the same effect, but with fewer details.

And now we come to two curious documents, which will no doubt enlighten the reader.

On January 23rd, Alba Ghirelli was again summoned before M. André.

"I maintain my previous statements, made on January 19th," she said at once, after having taken the oath.

Question. "There is a contradiction between those statements and the contents of the facsimile of a letter, which appears to be in your handwriting, is dated January 19th, and which was published by the *Matin* on the 20th—we hand you the facsimile."

Answer. "The letter of which this is a facsimile was written

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by me, but *was extorted from me.* When, on January 19th, I left this room, I was literally besieged by journalists, then taken in a motor-car to a café where numerous newspaper men were gathered who wanted to hear from me the statements I had made to you. I answered vaguely, declaring that I considered myself as morally unable to supply them with the requested information.

"I was then invited to dinner at Maire's by M. Charles Sauerwein, whose card I hand to you. M. Sauerwein insisted that I should confirm a fictitious mission—to Mme. Prévost—with which I was supposed to have been entrusted by Mme. Steinheil, and which I was supposed to have carried out; he also asked me to confirm the letter from Mme. Steinheil which I was supposed to have handed to Mme. Prévost. I told him that there was nothing true in all that.

"In the café and during the dinner at Maire's Mme. Sellier —who lives with me—was with me.

"After the dinner, M. Sauerwein persuaded that lady to leave me, and he asked me to come with him to the *Matin* offices. There, M. Vallier and M. Bourse joined M. Sauerwein, and I was literally laid siege to. I wanted to withdraw, but they opposed that.

"These gentlemen then explained to me that since my mission to Mme. Prévost was going to be contradicted by the whole Press the next morning, they would find themselves in a false position with their Director, M. Bunau-Varilla, that they wanted at all costs to put themselves right with the Director, and that I could easily get them out of their trouble by handing to them a letter for him. They added that this would not compromise me in any way, that they would merely show my letter to their Director—who was in the next room—and that immediately afterwards they would hand the letter back to me.

"I did not think I could refuse, and, under the dictation of M. Sauerwein and M. Bourse, I wrote the letter.

"When it was written, M. Sauerwein took it, and walked away, saying that he was going to show it to M. Bunau-Varilla.

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"One hour elapsed without M. Sauerwein reappearing. M. Vallier and M. Bourse were still with me.

"When M. Sauerwein returned, he held in his hands scraps of paper, and he said: 'That is all that remains of your letter. We tore it up, you can feel quite safe.'

"The next day, I was greatly surprised to see in the *Matin* the facsimile of the letter which you show me.

"I realised that M. Sauerwein had had the letter photographed during the hour that he was away.

"In the morning, I went to the *Matin* offices, where, protesting against such methods, I made a great scene.

"M. Sauerwein, and then M. Bourse, tried to calm me.

"Previously M. Sauerwein had promised to publish my '*Mémoirs*' in the *Matin*, and I was to be paid £200 for them; but during the scene at the *Matin* offices, on Wednesday January 20th, I demanded that the manuscript of my memoirs should be handed back to me, and, after raising some objections, M. Sauerwein returned the manuscript to me.

"Besides, I sent you by an express letter (*pneumatique*), dated January 21st, a denial of the articles published in the *Matin* about me."

Question. "Since we received the *pneumatique*, the *Matin* in its issue of January 22nd, has published another letter from you, still bearing the date of January 19th, 1909, and in its issue of this very day, the same newspaper speaks of persons who exercise a certain pressure on you. Give us some explanation about this."

Answer. "During the evening of January 19th, at the *Matin* offices, M. Sauerwein and M. Bourse, in the presence of M. Vallier, made me write (still under the pretext of putting themselves right with their Director, M. Bunau-Varilla)—besides the letter published the next morning in facsimile—two other letters:

"Firstly: the letter published in the *Matin* of January 22nd.

"Secondly: a letter declaring that I had, on December 31st, 1908, taken a letter written by Mme. Steinheil, to M. Leydet, examining magistrate.

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"I was made to write those two last letters about one and a half or two hours after my first letter. It was in any case after M. Sauerwein had returned with the so-called fragments of my first letter.

"When I had written the two other letters, I was told that as M. Bunau-Varilla had left the offices of the *Matin*, they would be able to restore them to me only in the morning, and that, meanwhile, M. Sauerwein would keep them in his pocket-book.

"The next morning, during the 'scene' I went to make at the *Matin* office, I claimed from M. Sauerwein the two letters, but he refused to restore them to me. M. Sauerwein said: 'They won't be published, but I want to keep them.' I declared to M. Sauerwein that I was going to demand their restitution through a bailiff. He retorted: 'That will have no other result than having the two letters authenticated.'

"I assert in the most absolute manner that Mme. Steinheil never entrusted me with any letter or mission, no more for M. Leydet than for any one else.

"Besides, at the time of my release—December 28th, 1908—I had not met Mme. Steinheil, in the corridor, for several days, and when on December 28th, after my acquittal, I had to go back to Saint-Lazare for the various formalities in connection with my departure from prison, I was not taken to my cell, but waited downstairs, in the office, where my belongings were brought to me. It would therefore have been impossible for Mme. Steinheil to have given me any letter or to have asked me to do anything for her.

"The letter published by the *Matin* on January 22nd alludes to a M. Boune, who takes his meals in the same restaurant as myself. Talking to me there, he advised me, as a matter of elementary prudence, not to mix myself up in any way with the Steinheil Affair. . . . These days, several journalists and barristers have given me at the restaurant the same advice as M. Boune. It is probably to this that the *Matin* of to-day alludes when it mentions 'pressure.' It is most likely that there are now reporters of the *Matin* con-

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stantly at that restaurant, and that they watch everything I do.

"(Signed) GHIRELLI.
REDMOND, Clerk.
ANDRÉ, Judge."

(*Dossier* Cote 3029)

This retraction was complete, absolute, but the harm had been done, alas, and the public believed all these dreadful lies published in the *Matin* and attributed to Ghirelli. Besides, who heard of the retraction, except the judge . . . and I, months afterwards, when the Dossier was handed to my counsel and me?

And now, for the sake of the truth, I will quote from the evidences given by "M. Sauerwein, Charles, 32 years old, journalist" . . . to M. André, the examining magistrate, on February 4, 1909:

. . . "I wish to specify the conditions on which we obtained those interviews (with Alba Ghirelli). At the end of December 1908 . . . we discovered the address of Ghirelli. She was very annoyed when we called on her, and said that before making any statements she wished to consult a few friends. She promised to call on me the next day at the *Matin*. I received an express letter from her, and joined her at the Restaurant de la Feria. I was accompanied by another member of the *Matin* staff. A first interview took place, which appeared in the *Matin* dated January 14th. This interview was entirely written under her dictation, and she signed it. . . . It concerned the statements made by Mme. Steinheil and collected by Ghirelli, about the guilt of Alexandre Wolff, the pearl placed first in M. Chabrier's pocket-book, but taken away from it after Mme. Chabrier's violent interventions, and about the 'necessary' suicide.

"The next day we gathered from Ghirelli a few other details about the visit of Pastor Arboux and plans for the future made by Mme. Steinheil. This second interview appeared in the *Matin* on January 16th.

"Between the first and the second interviews, Ghirelli told

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us that on the eve of the day when she was to appear before the Court of Appeal, where she thought she would be acquitted, Mme. Steinheil had given her two letters, one for Mme. Prévost, the other for a magistrate, and had asked her to telephone to one of her former friends. We have never mentioned the last two facts in our articles, but the Prévost story interested us. Ghirelli begged us not to attribute to her the revelation of the Prévost affair. . . .

. . . (On January 19th) "When Ghirelli left your rooms, one of our reporters accompanied her to the café Ducastaing . . . where she was joined by many journalists . . . thereupon one of our colleagues brought a note (the source of which I ignore) that Ghirelli had confirmed certain of the details published by us, but had denied two or three of the other points, and particularly the letter taken to Mme. Prévost.

"I was there. I told Ghirelli that in the face of those official denials we were simply going to publish the note brought by the colleague I have mentioned. She begged me to remain with her and to send for a third party, whose name I cannot give on account of 'professional secrecy.' I summoned the third party on the telephone. We were to have dinner at Maire's, the 'Countess' (Ghirelli), one of her lady friends called 'La Générale,' and I. The dinner was not altogether pleasant, for I was in the presence of a person who had just denied what she had stated on the previous day. The third person arrived.

("Personally, I have no doubt that he was M. Camille Dreyfus, Rosselli's counsel, to whose 'indiscretion' the Director of Saint-Lazare alluded in his report of January 21st, 1909 [*Dossier* Cote 3021]).

"The third person had a long chat with the 'Countess' in the next room. I was sent for, and the third person told me that the 'Countess' had a confession to make to me. She then declared: 'All that I have told you from the very first moment, and that you have published, is false, and is due to my imagination, except the details I confirmed before the examining magistrate.' I told the 'Countess' how much I regretted that she should have so sought her pleasure in lying, and she

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said that the *Matin* would publish the next day the note which I have mentioned to you.

"I was about to leave, but the 'Countess' detained me. The third person had just gone, and the 'Countess' said: 'I swear to you on the head of my children that all of what I have told you from the first to the last, is the exact truth. If I have denied it, it is because eight or nine persons whom I didn't know before have influenced me, intimidated me. People have gone so far as to tell me that they would have me arrested!' . . .

". . . Whilst the 'Countess' made to me, in private, the statements I have just repeated, the third person was waiting in the passage. I joined him, and told him what had happened. . . . He then left me and went back to the 'Countess,' whilst I went to the *Matin* and at once related all these incidents to the Editor. Five minutes later, the 'Countess' and the third person arrived at the *Matin*. In the presence of my colleague, M. Bourse, Ghirelli repeated that she had spoken the truth and that she hid part of the truth from you only because of the pressure put upon her. I said to her: 'Your word has no longer any value for me. You must write down what you say and sign it!' The 'Countess' showed some hesitation.

"I must tell you that on the very day when she gave us the interview which we published, I paid her 500 francs (£20) as a reward, and I promised her further sums of money—thinking of handing her—little by little, 2000 francs (£80) if the information which she might be able to supply, seemed interesting to us.

"Besides, I had it in my mind that the £80 were also to represent the price of her Memoirs. . . .

"To return to our conversation with the 'Countess' on January 19th . . . She suggested a document according to her ideas, but written by me, and merely dated and signed by her. I said I wanted the document to be written by her. . . . She consented, and wrote exactly four documents without being dictated to, but on lines that we suggested. (She thought them in accordance with the truth.) The first was published

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in facsimile in the *Matin* on January 20th; the second refers to the letter taken by the 'Countess' to a magistrate; the third tells the fact that Rosselli was beseeched by Mme. Steinheil not to repeat to the examining magistrate the revelations she might have made, and the fourth concerning the intimidations to which 'Countess' Ghirelli was submitted by various persons. We published this last letter too. When all was written and signed by her, she asked me for the rest of the £80, and I told her to come the next morning. She came . . . and asked me for the money. I consulted the Director of the *Matin*, and, returning to Ghirelli, I said to her: 'Madame, so long as you are a witness in the Affair, the *Matin* won't pay you anything, for I don't want it to be said that the *Matin* gave money to a witness in the Affair, so that she would confirm what she had said before . . .'

"Furious, she asked me to return her the manuscript of her Memoirs. The same evening she telephoned . . . and asked me to dine with her. I accepted . . . M. Bourse and M. Vallier were with me. She remained with one of the two others till 10.30 P.M., and afterwards went to the offices of the *Eclair*. And a day or two afterwards she told me that it was there, in the office of M. Montorgueil . . . that she wrote to you the letter of rectification which you must have received from her. Since then, Ghirelli has often asked me for money. . . . Last night, she again asked me for money, and again I told her: 'No, your being a witness makes it impossible for us to give you money . . . I only gave evidence in order to re-establish the reality of the facts *in all its exactness*.

"(Signed) SAUERWEIN.
SIMON.
ANDRÉ."

(*Dossier* Cote 3035)

Comment is unnecessary.

In regard to the mission to Mme. Prévost with which I was alleged to have entrusted Ghirelli, who was described in the *Matin* as having mysteriously journeyed to Mme. Prévost's by motor-car, several persons residing in the street where the

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motor-car was said to have stopped—who had been mentioned by the newspaper as having made statements that were quoted, of course—were interrogated on the matter by the Law:

"Mme. Kaufman, aged 41, doorkeeper at No. 11 Rue du Cher, consulted about the *Matin* article . . . declared: 'I have not made the statements attributed to me. I have never noticed an automobile at the corner of the street, nor did I see Mme. Prévost go and talk to some one hidden in a motor-car. *I absolutely confute everything that I have been made to say in the* Matin. It is not accurate, and, what is more, it is untrue.'"

"Mlle. Leveque, aged 23 . . . No. 11 Rue du Cher . . . consulted on the same matter, declared: I have seen nothing of the facts described in the *Matin* article, and have made *no declaration whatever to any one,* for the simple reason that I know nothing (about the matter), and that at the time when it is said a motor-car stopped near my shop I was not there. . . . I also wish to state that I don't know at all Mme. Prévost, and I don't like having been mixed up in that affair."

"M. and Mme. Thomas, doorkeepers, 9 Rue du Cher, also consulted, declared they had not seen the motor-car mentioned in the *Matin,* and they added that Mme. Prévost, their tenant, had not come down from her apartment on that day—December 31st—for she was unwell and could not leave her room.

"Mme. Prévost herself, asked whether she had received any letter from Mme. Steinheil on that date, and in the circumstances related by the *Matin,* declared that she had received nothing whatever from her since the last summer.

"(Signed) INSPECTOR DECHET."

(*Dossier* Cote 3017)

There remains one point to elucidate in the Ghirelli-Sauerwein interviews: the question of the pearl which I was said to have placed in M. Chabrier's pocket-book, and then to have placed it in Couillard's, only after a violent scene with Mme. Chabrier.

Here again I will quote from the Dossier, and the reader will have a further opportunity of looking into the methods

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of the newspaper which did so much to ruin me in the eyes of public opinion—as much while I was in prison as before my arrest:

"This January 21st, 1909, before us, André, &c. . . . has appeared M. Chabrier . . . who states:

". . . I have never had any knowledge that Mme. Steinheil tried to put, or did put in my pocket-book the pearl which was afterwards found in that of Couillard. I had never seen that pearl, and had never heard of it until the moment . . . when at the *Matin* offices, and before me, M. de Labruyère opened Couillard's pocket-book and made an inventory of its contents—which brought about the discovery of the pearl.

"With respect to this discovery—and as *one of the instances of the methods of intimidation adopted by journalists in November* 1908, *against the various inhabitants of No.* 6 *bis Impasse Ronsin*—I wish to draw your attention to the following fact:

"On November 24th (the day before the Night of the Confession) M. de Labruyère came to the house and talked to me about an article in the *Journal*, which stated that it was he who had opened Rémy Couillard's pocket-book. He added that since the statement was not correct, he wanted to prove to M. Bunau-Varilla that he, de Labruyère, had not opened the pocket-book. He asked me therefore to write a letter in which I would certify that I (Chabrier) had myself opened the pocket-book.

"Since it was M. de Labruyère who had opened it—as I stated when I gave evidence on November 21st, 1908—I protested, and so did my wife.

"M. de Labruyère insisted, saying that such an attestation was the more necessary to them (the *Matin*) and that my intervention as Mme. Steinheil's representative would be easier to explain than his own, and he added that if I did not write that letter, I might be ruining Mme. Steinheil's cause, for then M. Bunau-Varilla would abandon that cause and *would turn against her.*

"Mme. Steinheil was present. Struck by that argument,

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she advised me to write the letter. And I wrote the letter, after submitting a rough copy of it to M. de Labruyère.

" 'To M. de Labruyère, at the *Matin:* In contradiction of a statement published by a morning newspaper, it was not you who opened Couillard's pocket-book, but I, acting as Mme. Steinheil's representative.'

"Taking advantage of a moment when my head was turned, my wife seized the letter and tore it. M. de Labruyère again began to intimidate me, and I consented to write a second letter absolutely the same as the first. . . .

"I believe it my duty to add that on November 24th, 1908, it was not only the argument that I would ruin Mme. Steinheil's cause if I did not write the letter which made me write it, but also the following threat: M. de Labruyère said to me: *If you refuse to write the letter I am asking for, I will publish in the* Matin, *a semi-official report declaring that it was you who opened Couillard's pocket-book, and bearing the signature of M. Lecondimer, who was a witness, and my own. There will be mentioned your surname and Christian names and your position as travelling postal sorter.* And he added: You can guess the effects that will make on your administration. . . .

"(Signed) CHABRIER.
ANDRÉ.
SIMON."

(*Dossier* Cote 3014)

Needless to say, Mme. Chabrier fully corroborated these statements by her husband adding this typical remark: "She was so exasperated to hear M. de Labruyère declaring that he would make trouble for M. Chabrier at the Post Office, unless he wrote the letter, that she said to him: 'If my husband gets into trouble, you will have to deal with me. I'll blow your brains out!' "

(*Dossier* Cote 3025)

Two other persons were called upon to give evidence concerning the Ghirelli-Rosselli-Jacq revelations. One was poor Firmin, who, called before M. André on January 22, 1909, declared:

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"I have been Mme. Steinheil's companion first in Cell 11, then in Cell 12, which we still share. All I have noticed is that at night, as a rule, she does not sleep, but calls for her daughter, and opens the window at times, saying that her head hurts, that she is stifling.

"During the day she constantly talks to me about her daughter. . . .

"She has several times told me that from the time she returned from Bellevue her house was invaded by journalists . . . I have heard her say how grieved she was to have accused Wolff, and to have hurt her old Mariette. She constantly repeats that she is innocent . . . to me . . . to M. Desmoulin, to Pastor Arboux. . . ."

Question. "Have you any knowledge that, when Alba Ghirelli was released, Mme. Steinheil may have given her a letter or entrusted her with a mission?"

Answer. "I have no knowledge of such a thing. Now, ever since Mme. Steinheil has been in the same cell with me, I have never left her one moment alone. Besides, such a thing seems to me the more impossible since Mme. Steinheil and I have only heard of Alba Ghirelli's release, several days after the release had taken place.

"(Signed) SIMON.
ANDRÉ.
FIRMIN."

(*Dossier* Cote 3027)

The other witness was M. Desmoulin, who on January 20 declared before M. André:

"For many years past I have been visiting the poor, the patients in hospitals, and also prisoners. About a year ago the Minister of the Interior gave me permission to visit the prisons of the Seine Department, allowing me free access to my protégés. One of these, at Saint-Lazare, is a girl called Firmin. I visited her early in December 1908, and found that she had been placed in Cell 12, and having entered that cell I saw near Firmin a woman in mourning, and guessed that she was Mme. Steinheil . . . Since then I have seen both several times.

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Of Mme. Steinheil I have always asked, 'And you, Madame, do you feel well?' And she has always replied, 'Oh, yes, Monsieur, my conscience always keeps me up!' Every time she has emphatically asserted her innocence in convincing tones. She has always expressed her great grief at being separated from her daughter. That throughout has seemed to me the most noticeable point about her mental state. Sometimes, I have seen her cry, especially when she talked about her daughter.

"(Signed) SIMON.
DESMOULIN.
ANDRÉ."

(*Dossier* Cote 3014)

There is one side to this "Ghirelli Affair," as it has been called, which the reader has probably not realised. Not only did those revelations published by the *Matin* still further exasperate public opinion against me, but they added many days, perhaps even weeks, to my imprisonment. Judge André's investigations into the absurd matter took a long time to make—they represent 112 pages added to the already voluminous Dossier; I have read, reread . . . and counted them!—and meanwhile the *Instruction* was delayed, and therefore my imprisonment made longer . . . And I counted the days, the hours, at Saint-Lazare!

To sum up: Ghirelli denied, on oath, all her damaging statements, and other witnesses proved that they could never have been made; Firmin and M. Desmoulin gave evidence which fully vindicated me; there remained Marie Anne Jacq, who spoke against me and clung to her statements.

Well, I will give the end of Jacq's story:

She remained in cell No. 12 for several weeks. One day—the *Instruction* was over then—Jacq spontaneously came to me, burst into tears, and said: "Forgive me, Madame . . . You are too kind to me. To think that you know all I have spoken against you, and that you have not reproached me once. You give me your coffee, the eggs that your daughter brings . . . I can't stand it any longer. Listen. Ghirelli and Rosselli gave me wine, and I love wine, for life is hard here,

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Madame, and they told me what to say if I was called before the judge about you. I hated you, at the time; those two women said you had murdered your mother, that they knew it . . . and I promised anything they asked me. . . . And then, I thought: If I am called by the judge, it will mean leaving this wretched prison for a few hours, and that's a change. . . . It was dreadful of me to lie as I have done. . . . Look here, you must let me scrub the cell for you, in future, I will light your fire, help you in every way, only, forgive me, Madame. . . ."

Of course, I forgave her.

When she returned from the cell, that day, she looked greatly depressed. I asked her what had happened: "Ah!" she sighed, "they are sending me to the prison at Rennes. . . . Please, please, do something, speak to some one. . . . I want to remain near you, I want to stop here . . ."

But poor Jacq had to go. When she was about to leave the cell, she looked round, slowly, sadly. Then she came to me and said: "I heard you say to Sister Léonide, 'It must be nice to see a flower. . . .' Well, Madame, I picked one up in the chapel, when I swept there to-day." And she gave me a tiny branch of mimosa. . . . "You won't think too harshly of me, will you? Good-bye, Madame. . . ."

We were both weeping, she kissed my hand, and tottered away.

I kept the little branch of mimosa for four months. It became smaller and smaller, but it still looked like a flower, and the little gold pearls were the only beautiful things in that horrible cell.

The mimosa stood in an empty penny ink bottle, before a small frame containing a photograph of my mother, and one of Marthe when she was a baby.

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CHAPTER XXIV

SAINT-LAZARE

Towards the end of December 1907, after I had been about one month in prison, I had a long conversation with Maître Aubin and also with M. Desmoulin. I told them all I knew about the dreadful mystery.

When M. Desmoulin heard all the details concerning the mysterious personage whom my late husband and I had always called the "German," the pearl necklace given me by President Faure, and about the "documents," he eagerly said to me: "I will speak to the Prime Minister about this, and within a few days you will be a free woman again!"

Days went by. M. Desmoulin came frequently, but alas! instead of good tidings he gradually broke the news to me that an immediate release was out of the question!

I questioned my counsel. He, too, saw clearly that the pearls and the documents were the keys to the mystery, or, at any rate, one of the keys, but he hesitated as to the advisability of drawing attention to these facts. . . . "The whole affair is already so complicated," he explained, "it would perhaps be unwise to add new difficulties to . . . You have not spoken about the necklace and Faure's Memoirs to M. Leydet,—at any rate, not explicitly—you have not mentioned them so far to M. André . . . It is always dangerous and even suspicious to come forward with new statements. . . . And then, you must realise that the Government, the Law, will be rather displeased if those facts are brought forth, if the private life of a former President of the Republic has to be searched and discussed. . . . And it is never wise to upset the Government or to displease the Law. . . . After all, I will do what you decide but I am here to advise you; I am here, above all, to get you out of prison, to restore you to your Marthe. . . . Again,

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you have not sufficient proofs about those pearls. You don't know their exact origin, there is a mystery about them, the President told you so himself. It will probably cause a great deal of unpleasantness, and probably lead to no definite result. . . . *A quoi bon!*"

"I had thought that a counsel was a man who feared nothing and no one, who, with a strong conscience, indomitable will, and unconquerable logic, eliminated all obstacles and—at all costs—made truth triumphant in the end."

"Truth is a two-edged tool, Madame. The first duty of a counsel is to save his client, and I shall save you easily enough, for there are no charges against you whatever, but you must leave everything to me, and not complicate matters unnecessarily."

Time after time, during the twelve months I spent at Saint-Lazare, I revolted against such half-hearted, unsatisfactory and even compromising methods which made it possible for the prosecution to say that my evidence was incomplete, not clear, that I kept back too much . . . But Maître Aubin remained obdurate, and I feel sure that he meant well, and did the right thing.

Thanks to his all-conquering logic and fiery eloquence, the jury realised that I had done nothing to deserve being charged with a ghastly double murder, and I was acquitted. I thank him and his two secretaries—M. Steinhardt and M. Landowsky—with all my heart for their splendid devotion, but I know they will forgive me if I say that I regret that the whole truth did not come out at my trial.

Besides, Maître Aubin himself, time after time, told me: "I'll see that you are acquitted, Madame. Afterwards, you can and you should, tell the whole world all that I thought wiser not to reveal at the trial, for your own sake!"

I have followed Maître Aubin's advice: I am doing so now.

Saint-Lazare! How many times have I been asked, since I left that prison, to describe it, to describe the life I led there!

It was atrocious for a poor young woman "of the people"

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like Firmin, for instance, to live in a cell, but my fellow-prisoner would perhaps agree herself, that for a leader of society, for a woman of the world, it was almost worse. She had been used to a small shabby room or even a garret, to misery . . . and I to a vast house, servants, comfort, luxury even. Intellectual and artistic joys were unknown to her, but they had been the best part of my life. She was used to insults and vulgar language; they made me ill. She did not mind very much what she ate . . . nor did I, if only it were clean, but food was not, could not, be clean at Saint-Lazare, where elementary cleanliness and hygiene were quite unknown.

It would be difficult to conceive a prison more hopelessly dilapidated and insanitary than Saint-Lazare. The walls are cracked; the passages and staircases are evil-smelling; vermin abounds everywhere; light and air are worse than scant; the stoves of the cells are inefficient and even dangerous, as I learned at my own expense, for twice I nearly lost my life owing to escaping fumes. All the walls are damp and clammy; saltpetre oozes from them; they are hastily covered with a coat of black paint, but the saltpetre comes through again and they look as if they had been stuck over with some repulsive, viscous substance; the ceilings are low, except on the ground floor, where are situated the Director's apartments and various offices. It is cold everywhere. . . . The steps of the staircase are mostly broken; each step has a rotten, crumbling wooden edge, and there is filth in every corner. I could supply other—and worse—details, but will merely mention the baths. They are in the vaults of the prison, and on the way to them, one passes along the awe-inspiring dungeons where State-prisoners were kept in ancient days. Water runs down the rough-hewn walls. The atmosphere in that cave is icy cold all the year round. It is only lit by small air-holes. Each "bath room" is separated from the other by low walls, and one gains admittance to those "stalls"—for that is what they remind one of—by lifting a curtain. There are about ten of these stalls, and when I bathed, Firmin used to stand before the curtain to prevent the other women from coming to see—and insult—me. The baths were so unspeakably filthy

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that I was allowed to place a thick sheet inside and round the bath, so as to avoid contagion. . . .

The prison is in such a state that for years there have been rumours that it would be pulled down. It will tumble down, in a few years' time. It is a place of dirt and sloth, of abject misery and ignoble and degrading atmosphere, a hotbed of infection for the body, as well as for the mind. . . . Such is Saint-Lazare, where I spent *one whole year*—waiting for an ever-postponed trial!—Saint-Lazare, the woman's prison in the very heart of Paris, the City of Light!

Firmin worked, in order to earn a few pence. I did like her, in order to be occupied, to kill time, and also to live like Firmin and the other prisoners. We made sheets, towels, pillow-slips, napkins. . . . A part of this was for use in the prison itself, the other—the finer work—was sold to large Parisian stores. The days were short, and it was never very light in the cells with the ground-glass windows, the iron-bars and the wire-trellis. Besides the windows overlooked a yard, with high walls all round it and we were in winter. . . . So we worked mostly by the light of a candle stuck in the neck of a bottle. It was most trying to the eyes. The tiles were so cold that we always sat with our feet on the bars of our chairs, and our knees necessarily high up. Several times a day, we tried, with an old rag, to get rid of some of the water which accumulated in the crevices between the broken tiles and in all the places where the tiles *had* been. On rainy days, water somehow dropped through the rotten ceiling, and trickled down the walls, and there were small pools of water here and there around us. The walls, painted black except for a narrow band immediately below the ceiling, were so damp that after a few nights in prison, I felt such pains in the side of my body nearest the wall when I lay down that I applied for permission to pull my pallet a short distance from the wall. . . . I thus avoided the dampness of the wall and . . . the vermin which crawled on it. Mice were scarce, but ugh! the cockroaches! . . . One evening, I and Firmin, with hands trembling with disgust, killed over a hundred each in a very short

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time. At night, they ran about everywhere, climbing on our table, on our beds. . . . When one crawled on my skin I had nervous fits and screamed. . . . I wrapped my head up in a towel, and drew the sheet and blanket up over it, but I could still hear the cockroaches and feel them crawl over me. . . . "This woman will go mad," said the prison doctor one day, and I obtained permission to drag my bed, at night, into the very centre of the cell. Every day, I rubbed the legs and frame of my wretched bed with paraffin, and then I could rest in comparative peace . . . especially as Sister Léonide, by order of the doctor, gave me every night—and until the last day of my imprisonment—a sleeping draught, thanks to which I generally slept two or three hours. . . . But when one got up during the night, it was dreadful. One literally walked on cockroaches, and the horrible, crackling noise as their bodies were crushed underfoot, was enough to jar any one's nerves. . . .

I can fancy some reader saying: "Pools of water in a cell, broken tiles, mice, cockroaches by the hundred! . . . She exaggerates. . . . She is describing a cell in some prison of another century. . . ." I am *not* exaggerating; "Saint-Lazare" does not belong to another century. It is so old and tumble-down that, more than once, when looking into some dark room on my way to the parlour or the Director's office, I almost expected to see the heavy chains, the thumb-screws, the rack, the bilboes and other instruments of a torture-chamber!

Jacq left our cell at half-past six in the morning, and soon afterwards Firmin and I rose. We first of all lit the small stove. I had to pay for the wood and coal, of course. The coal was stacked in a corner of the cell, and I placed the wood on my only shelf, to keep it as dry as possible. Then we swept and cleaned the room. The door was opened to allow us to carry the dust away and fetch some water to wash—and to make coffee. We had to handle the coal with our hands, for a shovel might have been used as a weapon!

It was not easy to dress. All I had at my disposal was a very small stone basin, a jug—bought from the prison for fourpence—a brush and comb, a tooth brush, a piece of mot-

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tled soap, a penny looking glass less than three inches in diameter, and a hard rough towel. There was no bucket or pail, and we had to leave the cell—on the two or three occasions when the door was opened for a few minutes—to empty the basin. I had to do my washing-up in the very basin in which I used to wash . . . my face!

My daughter several times brought proper soap and tooth-paste for me, but the warder near the parlour invariably decreed: "You can't take these in; they are luxuries, and luxuries are prohibited here."

I wore a plain black dress, which I made myself in one afternoon in prison, and when I left my cell I threw a black hood over my shoulders. I wore my hair parted in the centre and fastened at the back with a piece of ribbon and a few hair-pins. That was the simplest coiffure, and the lightest to my ever-aching head.

I only wore the dress in which I had come to Saint-Lazare when I went to the Palace of Justice for the *Instruction*, and, of course, when, a year later, I was tried in the Assize Court.

Owing to illness and the complete lack of exercise—I was entitled to go round the yard for an hour every day, but when I did so, once, the other prisoners insulted and even hit me, and I had to give up that hour of exercise—I became very weak. Shoes hurt my feet, and I made a pair of slippers for myself with bits of cardboard, velvet, and fur given me by the sisters.

I also made a basket with plaited paper, to keep my bread clean.

After breakfast—coffee and bread—I usually opened the window to air the room and to look outside.

Below was the yard, with its few trees and its basin. I saw women washing or walking. Many of these prisoners were mothers, and held babies in their arms. Many had two or three children. There were little boys and girls—the oldest being about five—and they played with the rubbish on the ground, cried, fought, or hung to their mother's skirts. All were terribly unkempt and slovenly, and all were in tatters.

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The majority of these mothers ill-treated their children and abused them in the vilest language.

Foul and obscene language, indeed, is the rule at Saint-Lazare, when the scum of the feminine population of Paris, the lowest and most degraded of "gay women," the vilest viragoes of the slums, and thieves and vagabonds are brought day after day, the majority for a short time only.

How they loathed one another, and how they fought! . . . The Sisters hardly dared interfere, and it was only on rare occasions that the male warders were called upon to put an end to fierce quarrels and free fights. On one occasion I saw, through the bars of my window, two women literally tearing one another to pieces. They were gipsies, known at Saint-Lazare as "*les noires*" ("the black ones"). Their hair was loose, their clothes in shreds; they ploughed each other's face with their nails. Their mouths were torn and blood streamed over their cheeks and chins, giving them the appearance of demons. One had picked up a piece of sharp flint, and with it slashed the face of her enemy. Other women watched the fight and yelled with joy. The Sisters were powerless, and at last a warder was sent for. . . . He came, quietly. He was an old man who knew. . . . In each hand he held a bowlful of thick yellowish soup. Without a word, he handed one to each combatant. . . . Like beasts, they instantaneously forgot their battle, and eagerly started gulping down the soup, spooning it out with their hands.

I never dared remain very long at the window, for when the prisoners saw me, they invariably hurled at me shouts of execration.

I helped Firmin with the sewing, and by sewing all day and a great part of the night, managed to earn seven or eight francs *a month*. The work was paid for at the rate of one halfpenny per towel, napkin, or slip (one franc for two dozen), twopence per tablecloth and threepence for large sheets, but you had to pay for your cotton and needles, and when the work was not "perfect," it was refused, or no more work was given to you! With what I earned, I bought food from the canteen for Firmin, and my poor companion repaid me with

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such real devotion, such touching attentions as I had never received from any one, except from my Mother and Marthe.

The Sisters were so pleased with my work that they gave me the more difficult sewing to do—piles of fine napkins and tablecloths for the Spring sale at the *Printemps* and the *Bon Marché*. . . . No wonder those vast stores can sell beautiful table-linen at low prices which make purchasers exclaim, as I had so often done myself: "How can they do it!"

After a few months, my fingers became sore, and bled constantly—for besides the sewing, I had to scrub the cell, to prepare the fire, to wash up, to iron my own things (which I did by pressing them against the stove-pipe!) and all this soon ruins hands which have been used chiefly to play the piano, to embroider, or to write . . . Firmin, and later Jacq, wanted to do all the rough work for me, but that would not have been fair, and I insisted on taking my turn at it.

Sister Léonide then kindly taught me to make the "*frivolité*" (tatting), for which no needle was required, and for a time, I did no other work.

I have often thought of the sarcastic remarks certain newspapers and probably the Prosecution would have made, had they known that in prison I spent weeks making "*frivolité!*" . . . Did they not think it an extremely funny and eloquent omen that in the days of my childhood, I rode a mare called "*Cléopâtre*"!

There was a library at Saint-Lazare, but I could not read, for reading gave me neuralgia. Firmin read to me sometimes, very slowly and monotonously, of course, but I was very thankful to her.

Marthe came twice a week, and later, after I had been very ill for a time, she was allowed to come to the prison three times a week. Those visits were, need I say it, the one great solace in my misery. Poor little Marthe, how courageous she was, and how well she found the words that would comfort me and help me to live on until her next visit. . . . And to think that after my trial, after I had been acquitted, she was kept away from me for nearly two years, by kind souls who, thinking that I had not yet suffered enough, told her such fearful

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things about her mother and threatened her with so many calamities if she dared to come to me, that the poor child, who suffered as much as I did, alas, found it impossible to disobey those strict and inhuman orders, until, having married the man she loved, a young Italian painter, poor, but with a noble heart, she craved my forgiveness—as though I had anything to forgive her!—and came to me at last.

Maître Aubin also came two or three times a week, and not only gave me excellent legal advice, but did his utmost to comfort me in my awful predicament. His devotion, and that of his two secretaries, was truly admirable. And there were the visits of M. Desmoulin and of Pastor Arboux. I saw my notary, Maître Jousselin, several times, for I had to "emancipate" my daughter to enable her to sign certain documents and "represent" me in various circumstances.

The hours I liked best in the day were eight in the morning and half-past seven at night. Those were the hours of the Sisters' Service, in their own little chapel, which was exactly opposite my window. That chapel had been the cell of St. Vincent de Paul, and the spot where the altar stood was the very spot where the great man had died in 1660. I loved to hear the Sisters sing their beautiful Latin hymns, and Sister Léonide, who knew this, and who stood at the back of that chapel, that is, close to the window, opened the window just a little, so that I might hear the singing better. . . . And Sister Emmanuel, who was seventy-eight years old, and had been at Saint-Lazare for over fifty years, one day whispered in my ear: "You know, I have not sung in chapel for years. I am so old, but I sing now . . . for you, my poor child!" . . . I was so unhappy and so sensitive that this simple and sublime remark made me cry with emotion and gratitude. I could have knelt before her. I asked Sister Léonide what I could do for Sister Emmanuel, and she said: "Make her slippers. I'll give you everything to make them. It is so cold in this prison." . . . I never did anything in my life with so great and so radiant a joy.

What a wonderful person, this old, old Sister Emmanuel! When a woman who was being put into a strait-jacket

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screamed hysterically the presence of Sister Emmanuel was enough to calm her. She called all the prisoners "*mesdames*" or "*mes petites*" ("my little ones"). In the sewing-room she read aloud to the prisoners at work, but frequently her strength failed, the book fell from her hands, and she went to sleep. There reigned absolute silence then in the vast room, for the women respected her sleep. When Sister Emmanuel awoke she shouted from habit: "Now then, *mesdames*, silence, please!" And every one laughed. . . .

She gave courage to all, took an interest in every prisoner, and invariably advised them to "appeal," without even knowing whether the woman had yet been tried! Nothing disheartened or wearied her; her temper was always even. She was Serenity itself, ever smiling and comforting.

She was full of quaint expressions. Once when a prisoner stared at her she gaily said: "I am very plain, am I not, with my nose like a potato! Well, I've always been like that!" Another time, when I had just seen her preventing a woman—a new arrival—who had vilely abused her, from being punished, I could not help exclaiming: "Oh! *ma Sœur*, you are sure to go straight to heaven!" She laughed and replied: "Well, if I go there, it will really not have been difficult!"

"I love 'my women,'" she once said to me, in her tremulous voice, "and the worse they are the more they need love, and the more I love them." The prisoners all worshipped her like a Saint, and even the fiercest and most degraded woman would obey her, whatever the order was and at once. Sister Emmanuel had only to look at the woman. . . . I often wondered how it was that everybody bowed to and gladly obeyed this aged, bent Sister of Mercy with the emaciated and trembling body, so small that when she was sitting her feet were off the ground, until one day I looked into her eyes. . . . There was the Holy Spirit in those eyes.

The Sister Superior, *Ma Mère*—My Mother—as every one called her, a tall, strong woman of about fifty, with large blue eyes shining with kindness, came from time to time to see me—which was a very great favour. At first, she was cold and almost distant, but gradually she changed and became more

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and more affectionate, and remained a little longer in my cell.

Sisters Superior from all parts of France came to see her when they were in Paris and they always visited me, not out of curiosity but out of sympathy, for My Mother had evidently spoken to them about me.

I remember the Sister Superior of a prison at Rouen. She came from time to time to Paris, and always spent a long while with me. This sainted woman spoke to me with so much profound sympathy that I once said to her: "But, Ma Mère, I am sure you must despise me. . . . I have not been a faithful wife; I have accused a man without having absolute proofs that he was guilty. . . ." She took my hands in hers and replied: "No creature on earth is despicable; we don't know what a being is, has been, or might have been."

There were four small tables in our cell—three feet by one and a half—and Sister Léonide on a day when I was more profoundly dejected than usual gave them names to try to make me laugh: the *drawing-room table* (also called *dressing-table*) on which stood the mimosa in its ink-bottle and the photographs of my daughter and my mother; the *dining-room table* used for our meals; the *library table* on which we wrote our letters and the *work-table* for our sewing. Marthe once brought me some material to repair a petticoat, but there was more than necessary, and with the extra material I made a cover for the drawing-room table; and Sister Léonide occasionally gave us some sheets of white or brown paper to lay on the "dining-room" table.

After each meal we opened the window, whatever the weather might be, and gave crumbs of bread to the sparrows and the pigeons. When for some reason or other, we were late in doing so, the birds would knock at the window with their beaks through the wire-trellis.

At night, besides the cockroaches, there were the cats to prevent one from sleeping. Saint-Lazare is so infested with rats that scores of cats are kept to destroy them. Moreover, almost every Sister has a cat as a companion.

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In the evening before the cells were locked and bolted for the night—after the prisoners had emptied their basins and filled their jugs with water—one or the other of the Sisters, and sometimes two or three of them, came to spend five minutes, at most, with me. . . . I looked forward all day to those five minutes.

After that, I used to go to the end of the Boulevard of the Cells, to watch the Sisters go to evening payer. I loved those Sisters. Their life was like that of the prisoners; they lived in similar cells, ate the same food, were insulted by the women just as I and others were, but they remained quite unruffled and patient. . . . The mere sight of them did me good.

I watched the night procession through the bars of the gate. . . . The *abbé* came first, followed by the Sister Superior and then all the Sisters. . . . They went in single file, their heads bent down, their arms hanging by their sides, slowly, silently. The only noise was the soft jingling of the bunches of keys hanging from their waists, of their large ebony crosses, and of the beads of their rosaries. . . .

In the shadow I could not see their black gowns; I only saw their white cornettes, which looked like the white wings of birds, and under each cornette there was a serene face, beautiful because the eyes were pure and the soul was filled with charity and the love of God.

Sixty Sisters passed thus, and as they went by the heavy iron gate though which I was watching, each Sister raised her head and faintly, divinely smiled at me as if to say: "I will pray for you in the chapel. . . ."

I forgot my misery; I forgot that I was accused of murder; . . . I returned to my cell and from behind the bars of my open window, I listened to the songs and prayers. . . . Then I lit my candle, went to bed and read a page of the Bible. . . .

Firmin, afterwards, would talk with me. We whispered. . . . But sometimes we forgot, and spoke too loudly . . . and in the night we heard the voice of the Sister on duty in the Boulevard of the Cells, saying slowly, monotonously: "Silence . . . silence . . . silence. . . ."

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE "INSTRUCTION"

From December 5th, 1907, to March 13th, 1909, my "Instruction" took place in the Palace of Justice, in the Cabinet of M. André, the Examining Magistrate. . . . I am not superstitious, but I state for the sake of those interested in such coincidences, that the cell to which I was taken after my arrest was cell No. 13, that my *Instruction* lasted 13 weeks, that my final interrogatory took place on March 13, and that the jury returned to decide my fate on November 13 (1909).

As I have already explained, what is called the "Instruction" in France is the preliminary but exhaustive, definite inquiry into a crime.

Before my first appearance at the Palace of Justice, Maître Aubin came to Saint-Lazare.

"The *Instruction* will begin to-day, Madame. Summon to your assistance all the courage you possess. André is no genius; but he is a relentless, pertinacious judge who will do his utmost to make you contradict yourself and draw terrible conclusions against you from those contradictions. You are innocent, but he will make you feel that you are guilty; every hesitation, every slip, however unconscious or unimportant, every reticence will become formidable weapons in his hands. Don't accuse any one—Couillard or Wolff, or Balincourt. Even though he examines your private life—and he is sure to do that—don't mention your 'friendship' with M. B., the Attorney-General, or your intimacy with President Faure. They would only irritate him. Besides, if you did, he would only change the subject of 'conversation.' You must forget that you have received in your Salon, Ministers of State and Diplomatists, eminent politicians and eminent judges, even though you are asked who came to your house. Just reply to

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André's question and nothing else. Say merely 'Yes,' or 'No,' whenever possible, for he will twist your replies as often as he can do it 'legally,' into something damaging to your case. I know that he is absolutely convinced that you are guilty and he will do his best to make even you believe it! It is scandalous, infamous, and everything else you like to call it, Madame, but I can't help it!"

I was bewildered!

Marthe came that same morning to give me courage, and also Pastor Arboux, Sœur Léonide and one or two other Sisters accompanied me, on my way to the prison door, as far as they could, and they, too, spoke many kind words to me.

Downstairs, under the porch, I saw three of the inspectors I knew so well, waiting for me. I was told to enter a taxi. One of the inspectors sat near the driver and the other two men inside with me. They were armed with revolvers, and looked anxiously through the windows. . . . They feared the crowd, but our journey was uneventful.

"Have you discovered anything?" I asked them. "Have you found any new clue? Are you on the tracks of the murderers, at last? . . ."

"Alas, no, Madame."

"Will the *Instruction* be very long?"

"Most likely it will. Ah! that judge! He is making all kinds of investigations. He sends us to all kinds of places. We don't get a rest. M. André is killing us! . . ."

"So much the better!" I replied in my eagerness.

The two inspectors laughed. . . . That was the first laughter I had heard since Ghirelli and Rosselli had burst into endless laughter because I did not know that the coffee was sold ready prepared.

We reached the *Dépôt* near the Sainte Chapelle, the stained windows of which I saw from a distance; and I thought of the day when I took Marthe to that marvellous Gothic jewel to admire her grandfather's work. The inspectors, after wishing me "good luck," entrusted me to the care of the *portier* who in his turn led me to the Sisters' gate. The *portier*, too, was kind and polite. A man of middle age with clean-cut features

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and grey hair, he saluted me in the military fashion. . . . Every time I came to the *Dépôt*, he had a good word for me, and these little attentions were a source of great comfort to me, who, at Saint-Lazare, heard day after day the foulest and vilest insults.

A Sister took me to a small cell, and locked the door on me. But it was soon opened again, and I heard a voice say, "The Sister Superior." I looked up and was transfixed. I have seen many beautiful women, both in life and in art, but none could have compared in divine loveliness with the woman who entered my cell at that *Dépôt*. The oval of her face was perfect, her eyes, which seemed like liquid and transparent turquoises, neither blue nor green, were exquisite . . . Her voice was the most musical I had ever heard. Her refined and shapely hands were poems of loveliness. But her supreme charm was her expression. It was not of this world; it was too noble, too lofty, and, above all, too serene. . . .

Later, when we had often spoken together, I begged her, discreetly, hesitatingly, to tell me about herself. She merely said, "I am the Sister Superior of the *Dépôt* . . . and I have suffered a great deal in the past." . . . I never dared ask her another quesion, but I have often wondered what great lady she was . . . and to what great sorrow she referred . . .

My cell at the *Dépôt* was even worse than my cell at Saint-Lazare. It was small and low, and had only an air-hole for window; there was a bed, a board fastened into the wall, used as a table, and a three-legged stool held to the floor by a chain . . . But when the Sister Superior entered the cell, everything seemed radiant and beautiful.

She coaxed me into eating a little, asked me a few questions about my daughter, and comforted me.

Then the Director of the *Dépôt* entered, a tall, well-dressed, stern-faced man, with the look of the officer about him. He, too, compelled me to eat: "The *Instruction* will exhaust you. You will need a great deal of physical as well as moral strength." After he had gone, the Sister Superior advised me to lie down on the bed until I was sent for, and I did as she told me.

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A sister came to fetch me, and led me to a door where two soldiers of the Municipal Guard were waiting for me. It was an awful blow to me. I did not mind the inspectors. I knew and liked them, and they had long worked with and for me . . . but a soldier on either side of me! . . .

They saluted me, however, and later, when I asked one of them why he always saluted me, a prisoner accused of murder, as he would an officer, he replied: "I don't know myself, I'm sure, Madame . . . but there, I can't help it."

The two guards took me along a passage. We passed before a row of cages, inside which were men with horrid faces. They shouted at me through the bars, and the guards told me to hasten . . . I learned afterwards that the official name of this passage lined with cages is "*La Souricière*"—the "mouse-trap."

We reached another building. The authorities were so afraid of enterprising journalists that guards had been posted at every door, a precaution, however, which did not prevent a photographer—on the *Matin* staff, of course—who had climbed up to a carved-stone ledge above a door at the top of a staircase, from taking a snapshot of me as I walked up the steps between the guards! . . . I confess, however, that I was so frightened for the man's safety in his perilous position, that I forgot to be angry.

I entered a room where I found my three counsel. After a few words of encouragement, Maître Aubin took me to Judge André's Cabinet.

I felt miserable, ashamed, and indignant.

I saw M. André. He wore a frock-coat and a black tie. He seemed a man of about fifty, was very stout, with a red, congested face, and a greyish beard. His hair was dark and spare. His eyes seemed to jump about behind the pince-nez, and they seldom looked straight at any one.

"Sit down!" he ordered. His voice was even more vulgar and aggressive than his appearance.

He sat at a long table, with my counsel behind him; opposite him sat his clerk, M. Simon, who wrote down the main questions and answers. I sat at one end of the table, with the

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two municipal guards behind me, and opposite, at the other end of the table, was the window, so that the light struck me straight in the face.

M. Simon, the *greffier*, was middle-aged, slim, and had a shrewd, pleasant face. He was calm, methodical, and kind. How many times, during that bewildering and painful *Instruction*, did he give me a glance of sympathy! How many times did he stealthily wipe away a tear! . . . How often, when I made a triumphant reply, did he half-mischievously wink at me, like a *gamin de Paris*, as if to say: "You got home all right that time."

Behind me the guards sometimes whispered, after some fierce battle of words between M. André and me: "Well done!" . . . and in their own simple, spontaneous way, they added: . . . "little woman!"

That "Well done, little woman" of the guards, and the winks of encouragement from the clerk, more than once gave me renewed strength at moments when, worn by my ceaseless efforts, I was about to give up the awful struggle, not in despair, but through sheer physical and mental exhaustion.

M. André's first move was a dramatic one, and one which he evidently thought would crush me outright. He handed me a letter—written by myself to my husband, in a rather angry tone—and asked impressively: "Was this written by you?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"To whom was this letter addressed?"

"To my husband."

"At what date?"

"I don't remember! . . ." I then explained that M. Steinheil and I always wrote to each other when we did not agree on some point, 'so as to avoid discussions and scenes . . .' And M. André thus led me to state that my husband and I were not on the best of terms, and that I did not love him.

I meant, of course, that there was no question of passion between us; but the sentence was written . . . "I did not love my husband," and these words became one of the greatest

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arguments against me, one of the proofs of my guilt . . . You did not love your husband, therefore you killed him!

Having achieved this momentous victory, M. André proceeded, in the most aggressive tone, to interrogate me about my "friends," but took good care not to question me about the Attorney-General or President Faure. And as Maître Aubin made signs to remind me of his warnings, I did not mention them.

After that, the examining magistrate put to me endless questions about my jewels. . . . I have explained at length all about them to the reader, and need not go into the matter again. Nor need I reproduce here the whole of the *Instruction*. Several parts of it have already been quoted, and I intend quoting the last episode of this atrocious martyrdom in full.

From time to time M. André ceased questioning me, and tried by little dramatic interludes to throw me off my balance.

During the very first hour of the first *Instruction* he abruptly turned to me and exclaimed fiercely: "Your veil is down; why is your veil down? . . . It is down because you want to hide your face, it is down because you are guilty! . . . Raise that veil at once, raise it, I say! . . ."

Another time, he rose, bent forward towards me, and shouted: "You are the assassin!" . . . I rose in my turn, and, completely losing control of myself, I cried back: "It is you who are the assassin! You are murdering my daughter and me!"

He was furious. "I'll have you arrested!" he shouted.

"I'm arrested already," was my obvious reply. He made a violent gesture, went into the next room, and banged the door.

M. André invariably sought refuge in the next room, whenever I had the better of him.

He smoked cigarette after cigarette during my *Instruction*, and blew the smoke in my direction. It was so obvious an impertinence, and he showed such satisfaction at my impatience, that one day I did not reply to his question.

"Why don't you answer?" he exclaimed triumphantly.

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"Is it that you realise that it is no longer any use struggling against all the evidence that reveals your guilt?"

I merely replied: "I cannot speak on account of the smoke, *Monsieur.*"

M. André continued smoking, but henceforth blew the smoke in a different direction.

"It is really amazing . . ." he said to me one day. "Can't you see that, if you were not guilty, you would ask your whole family, your friends, to visit you at Saint-Lazare! You are ashamed, because you are a criminal!"

Such words hurt beyond description, but I managed to reply:

"Monsieur, Marguerite Japy does not receive her friends in a prison-parlour."

M. Simon, my three counsel and the guards, nearly clapped their hands.

Another time, he suddenly placed under my eyes photographs of the bodies of my husband and my mother, as they had been found on the morning after the crime. . . . I have been told that all I said was: "Poor mother, poor Adolphe; at any rate, they probably did not suffer much, they must have died very quickly . . . there is no expression of agony on their faces. I wish I too had died that night."

M. André tore the photographs from my hands; his dramatic move had not had the result he expected.

The most extraordinary incident—I could say comical, had the circumstances not been so tragic—during that eventful and harrowing period, took place towards the end of the *Instruction.*

M. André, haunted by the thought of my guilt or rather by the thought that he must find me guilty, stood up and suddenly exclaimed in his usual hoarse and angry voice, and underlining, as it were, his every word with threatening gestures: "Yes, you are guilty! I tell you that you have strangled your own husband and your own mother, with your own hands, your powerful assassin's hands!"

Now I have unusually small hands, and scores of times Bonnat and Henner have sketched or painted them, and made

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M. ANDRÉ, MY EXAMINING MAGISTRATE

"You are the Assassin!"

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amusing remarks about "those ridiculously tiny hands." I stretched out my arms, and placed my hands under the very eyes of the examining magistrate.

In spite of his blind fury, he was able to realise their size, but he was not going to allow himself to be thwarted by such a trifling matter.

He caught his breath, then, coming nearer to me, he exclaimed: "Yes, all murderers have long arms and enormous hands. . . . Well, you are different, you are an exception, that's all. . . . And the very smallness of your hands proves that you are guilty. Even in your physique you deceive, you lie. . . . And those little hands which look so innocent are the more criminal, since they look so innocent. There!"

And he concluded this frenzied outburst by dealing a terrific blow on the table with his clenched fist.

I looked at him, I watched *his* hands. . . .

"What's the matter! Why do you look at me like that!"

I looked fixedly at the hands of the examining magistrate, enormous, red, hairy hands, and then let my gaze wander over his long arms, until my eyes met his. . . .

I was trembling with pain and anger. This man had treated me like a murderess from the very first minute of the *Instruction*, and had tortured me as those two journalists had one night, only more relentlessly, and with greater persistence. . . . They had an excuse—they were after copy—but this judge had none. He was supposed to be seeking light, and truth, and justice. And no judge should take it for granted that the person he is interrogating has committed the crime of which he—or she—is suspected.

"What are you looking at?" M. André asked.

"I was examining your hands, *Monsieur le Juge*." . . .

"Well . . . ?"

". . . And I was thinking what a fortunate thing it was for you that you are not accused of any murder, for even though you were as innocent as I am, the size and look of your hands would unmistakably denounce you as a murderer—if you had to deal with a judge after your own heart!"

M. Simon, the *greffier*, had ceased writing, Maître Aubin

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was smiling. I could hear the two guards chuckle, and M. André, utterly routed, left the Cabinet, and for a long while we heard him walking up and down in the next room.

Each *Instruction* lasted from noon until seven or eight in the evening. I was then taken back to the *Dépôt*, where I waited one hour and often much longer before being escorted to Saint-Lazare by two or three inspectors. It was sometimes ten or eleven, when, thoroughly exhausted, and having had no food for twelve hours or so, I entered my cell where Firmin and Jacq were waiting for me. Firmin never went to bed until I was back.

Sister Léonide, too, awaited me. . . . After the third or fourth *Instruction*, she was so alarmed at my appearance that she thenceforth always had some kind of surprise in store for me when I returned from the Palace of Justice. On one occasion she gave me a little plate, an ordinary, coarse, penny white plate, but what a luxury! . . . Then she presented me with three parcels wrapped in tissue paper, and in them I found a little salt, a small piece of butter, and . . . three hot potatoes in their jackets. It seemed to me that I was hungry, that I must be hungry, after those *Instructions*, but somehow I could not eat. On that occasion, however, I was overjoyed to see food *on a plate*, and Sister Léonide fed me with a spoon, as one feeds a child. After that she brought me three baked potatoes every evening.

She asked me one day how it was that I was so fond of them, and I told her that it was my father's favourite dish. Potatoes "in their jackets" are called in French *pommes de terre "en robe de chambre"* (in their dressing-gowns), but my father said, far more prettily: *"en robe des champs,"* which sounds alike, but means in their country clothes, in nature's garb.

In spite of Sister Léonide's care, of my daughter's solicitude, and of the devotion of my three counsel, that *Instruction* was using up the little vitality and strength I still possessed. It was dreadful to have to reply to all kinds of insidious and perfidious questions, for seven or eight hours at a time, especially as the questioner never once ceased to make it per-

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fectly obvious that he considered me a murderess, a murderess without even an accomplice . . . until the very end, when, after reading the various experts' reports, he admitted that I had probably been assisted.

M. André was convinced that I was guilty, but in view of the long report which he would have to draw up at the end of the *Instruction*, and which would go to the *Chambre des Mises en Accusations*, he had to accumulate at least as many proofs as possible of my guilt, and as there were none, his task was arduous! And it was the very difficulty of his task which made him so aggressive, threatening, and palpably unjust.

There was not a method, there was not a trick, that he did not think permissible. In order to put me off my guard, as it were, he would jump from one question to another, question me, for instance, about a detail of my life at Bellevue, then abruptly ask me the exact figures of the various sums of money that I said were to be found in the drawer of the desk of my boudoir, on the night of the crime. After bewildering me with questions about the exact origin of such amounts (six months after the money had been stolen) he would ask me a list of the contents of our medicine-chest at the time of the murder!

At every *Instruction* he dealt with everything—at once. . . .

And when I hesitated, faltered, made a slight mistake or did not exactly repeat the answers I had made on other occasions to the same questions, he jumped up with glee: "I've got you!" . . .

Another of the examining magistrate's favourite methods was to ask me a question of such a length that when written down, it covered quite two large pages . . . And woe betide me if I missed a single one of the numberless points included in that one question! When, on a few occasions, I ventured to ask that some portion of the endless question be repeated to me, I was told, in a melodramatic tone, that I wanted time to reflect, and that I should not need to reflect if I were innocent, that the truth never hesitated, but burst forth at once.

When I collected myself by a truly superhuman effort and

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appeared calm, I was cleverly concealing my hand, and therefore I was guilty.

When my nerves failed me, and I broke down, or sobbed; my weakness, my grief, were due to remorse; therefore I was guilty.

When I cried that I was innocent, I was playing a comedy, but he was not to be taken in by my grimaces! I was acting; therefore I was guilty.

When I did not mention my innocence, I was overwhelmed with shame, and did not even dare to say that I was not guilty; therefore I was guilty!

Whilst I was thus being slowly tortured, the three men and the woman who that night entered my house in the Impasse Ronsin, who committed the double murder, who robbed, who bound and gagged me . . . were free, somewhere in the world, in Paris, perhaps, and possibly reading the latest details of my *Instruction* in the newspapers, for after each "sitting" a résumé of the proceedings was handed to the Press, in which, as the reader may surmise, I appeared more and more guilty!

Eight months after the end of the *Instruction*, at my trial, the Judge, M. de Valles, was to declare: "I feel the shudder of a judicial error," and the jury acquitted me. Eight months! Why did not M. André feel that "shudder of the judicial error"? Because, and this is his only excuse, he was obsessed by the firm conviction that I was guilty, and, more or less unconsciously, he made nearly everything fit in with that conviction, and, at the same time, ignored or passed rapidly over almost anything that he could not. A few instances taken from the Dossier of the *Instruction*—signed by M. André, M. Simon, and myself—will illustrate my assertions:

(M. André had been asking me endless details about a ring and a pearl, when he pointed out to me some contradictions in my past statements.)

Answer. "You are speaking to me about statements I made at a time when I was half mad. At that time the question of my jewels was quite indifferent to me. I had but one tormenting thought, the loss of my mother." . . .

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(M. André interrupted me with the following triumphant exclamation:)

Question. "Then you felt no sorrow at having lost your husband!"

Answer. "But yes, of course." . . .

Another instance:

Question. "It can hardly be admitted that robbery was the motive of the crime, for one cannot very well conceive that the thieves, *after committing a double crime in order to act at their ease*, would neglect to rob, and should leave on the spot, the following booty: (1) In your mother's room, three rings on a tray; (2) One diamond brooch, two valuable pendants, two pins with small stones—which your mother had brought to your house when she put up there in May. . . . (3) In your husband's room, the latter's clothes were not searched, and yet they were placed, conspicuously, on a chair, and they contained a gold watch, a purse containing eighty francs (£3 4s.); (4) In the boudoir, a bank note of fifty francs (£2) was left, although it was conspicuous; (5) From the statements you made just now, some of your daughter's jewels, which were then in her room, where you slept, were not stolen!"

Answer. "What can I answer you . . . anything may be found strange. . . . People who had just committed a murder would not perhaps be as calm as you think and so would not steal everything."

(I then explained that my mother's bag was on the floor in a box-room, that night.)

Question. "That explanation is hardly satisfactory."

Answer. "All I can say is that people, after committing two such ghastly murders, and after believing they had made a third victim of me, may have lost their heads, and only have had one thought: to disappear as rapidly as possible."

(*Dossier* Cote 3239)

What likelihood was there that the men had come to kill? M. André took it for granted, and made the extraordinary remark that they had "killed" *in order to act at their ease!*

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Personally, and it has been the opinion of every person I have met who has carefully studied the case, that the men came to steal, and were disturbed in their work, by the sudden appearance of my husband, armed with an alpenstock, and by the cries of my mother, and that it was then, and only then, that the murders took place?

As for the robbery, did not the men steal several hundred pounds, and some twenty pieces of jewellery, belonging to me and my mother?

Question. "Since your last examination, we have compared the recital of the drama as you made it then with the one you made at the beginning of the investigations (May 31st and June, 1908). We find that whilst you merely mentioned to us, as the acts of violence you suffered at the hands of the criminals, one blow on the head and the trampling on your stomach, you had previously mentioned other acts of violence: on May 31st, 1908, to the police-commissary, you said that you had received blows with a stick, on your head; on May 31st, to the police-commissary, and then to M. Leydet, you said you had been seized by the throat at the beginning of the scene; on May 31st and on June 5th, to M. Leydet, you said that one of the men had clasped your wrist, and finally, on June 26th, to M. Leydet—to whom you never mentioned more than 'one blow on the head'—you declared with precision that the blow had been like one dealt with a club, or with a hard body, and that it had evidently been meant by the criminals to be the finishing stroke. How do you explain so many *variations* in your successive recitals?"

Answer. "You should not take into account the statements I made on May 31st (shortly after the fatal night); I did not know what I was saying then, I was out of my mind, I was frightened of everything. One of the men did seize my wrist . . . If I spoke with more precision on June 26th, about the blow on my head, it is because, since the drama, I had been trying to recall every detail of it."

Question. "On November 26th (1908), you stated that you had invented the whole story of the men with the beards, etc., and the red-haired woman and the black gowns."

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Answer. "That was the result of the work of the journalists. They led me to distraction, madness."

Question. "In any case, *the tale of the black gowns* is full of material impossibilities. Why should the criminals, at the beginning of the scene, have thrown a cloth on your head, since they did not keep it there, and since you were able to get rid of it immediately afterwards? How can you explain this: those dark lanterns threw a great light on you, and yet, the criminals made the mistake and persisted in it, of thinking they were in the presence of a young lady, of a child? They were in the shadow, and yet you distinguished them so perfectly that you were able to observe thoroughly every one of the actors of that scene, to notice the absence of a collar from their special costumes, and the ugliness of the red-haired woman, and to read clearly the expression on the face of that red-haired woman. How can one explain that all the doors being open, you did not hear your husband leave his bed and take his alpenstock, nor hear either your husband or your mother scream whilst they were being strangled?"

Answer. "A cloth *was* thrown over my head. I don't know whether the lanterns were dark lanterns or not. All I know is that their light was the greater because it was reflected by the five mirrors in the room. . . . There is nothing extaordinary in the fact that the criminals took me for my daughter. I look older now, but at that time I had quite a youthful appearance, so much so that I was most of the time taken not for my husband's wife, but for his daughter. As for the doors—which were open when we all went to bed—I don't know whether the criminals left them open. All I heard, I repeat it, was the word 'Meg,' spoken by my mother at the moment I said."

(The next question, asked without any transition, was):

"Did you put a pearl in Couillard's pocket-book on November 20th?"

(*Dossier* Cote 3249)

(The reader will probably agree that my answers, especially for a woman tortured as I had been for so many months, were

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fairly clear, precise, and satisfactory. The Examining Magistrate thought differently:)

Question. ". . . Your cleverness at dissimulating before the Law has become such that in the course of our interrogations we have rarely obtained from you a clear and convincing explanation, such that, every time we have asked you to reply in a precise manner to our questions concerning the dominating facts of the case, you have, as a rule, tried to avoid replying, often by saying you did not remember, or even that you did not understand. *You have even gone so far as to let the fear that your face might betray you in our presence, make you hide it behind the black veil with the wide thick edge which you are still wearing, and which, in spite of the exhortations we addressed to you during one of our first interrogations, you have never raised above your forehead. Your face has no more revealed itself than, willingly, you have revealed the bottom of your thoughts.*"

(*Dossier* Cote 3240)

(I had been told not to speak about President Faure, even when asked about my friends, nor about the famous pearl necklace, even when questioned about the stolen jewels. The necklace was mentioned, however, but not by me. And I realised then the truth of Maître Aubin's words, when he had said that neither the Government nor the Law wished to have anything to do with my relations with Félix Faure and the mysterious necklace affair. M. André, who, when I hesitated, compelled me to reply in no half-hearted manner, made a striking exception on that occasion, as the reader may see from the following quotations from the Dossier.)

(It appeared that M. André had recently interrogated, amongst other people, a man called Brun, a decorator, who had long been one of my husband's acquaintances, and who years ago, at M. Steinheil's request, pledged some jewels of ours at the Mont-de-Piété. The "pearl necklace" affair came out quite accidentally. M. André asked me about Brun and the pledged jewels, and I replied that I only remembered Brun

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having been once to the Mont-de-Piété for my husband, and that, ten years ago.)

The Judge asked: "Don't you know that it was a pearl necklace Brun pledged?"

I hesitated to reply, and finally said (I quote from the Dossier):

"Allow me not to talk about that. It was a necklace I received as a present; it had five rows of pearls. I gave it to my husband, and told him he could do what he liked with it, that he could sell it when he pleased." . . .

(*Dossier* Cote 3308)

I explained that my husband and I lived quite apart, but that I allowed him to make use of my jewels when he was short of money. When I had finished, M. André made no remark at all about the pearl necklace, and proceeded with his interrogating as if that jewel had had no importance whatever.

Two days later, however, during the next *Instruction*, M. André, wanting, perhaps, to make sure that the necklace Brun had spoken of was really the mysterious and all-important necklace given by President Faure, asked me a few details about it. I replied:

"The five-row pearl necklace, of which I spoke to you the day before yesterday, was sold during the past ten years little by little, that is, pearl by pearl or in series of pearls, by my husband. I did not have anything to do with those sales . . . All I know is that at the time of the drama there still remained some pearls from that necklace . . . Those pearls were then in the lower drawer of the wardrobe where I usually placed my jewel-cases. I had seen, towards May 5th or 6th, about ten pearls. I had not taken them to Bellevue, and since the drama I have not seen them again. They have therefore been stolen, unless my husband had sold them between May 5th and May 30th, but that would surprise me . . ."

Question. "Why have you not spoken about those pearls?" . . .

Answer. "On account of my daughter. I wished to keep silent about the origin, that is, the giver, of those pearls."

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Question. "By mentioning their disappearance, nothing compelled you to indicate their origin?"

Answer. "I did not wish to speak about that necklace" . . .

(*Dossier* Cote 3310)

Once again M. André did not insist.

During another *Instruction*, one month later (*Dossier* Cote 3389), M. André tried to make me contradict myself about the necklace, stating that one of my accounts of the occasion when M. Brun consented to pledge jewels for my husband did not tally with another; he also remarked that my friend M. Mustel, the piano and organ manufacturer, who had seen the famous pearls, had described, in quite a different way from that in which I had described it, a family scene, at my house, about certain debts of my mother's which I was ready to pay by selling the pearls I still possessed. But all this had but a very vague connection with the necklace itself. I may further state that M. Brun stated that he received only about £6 for the necklace he pledged, so that either he referred to a necklace of which I know nothing, or he made a huge mistake. At any rate, I do not know of necklaces with five rows of pearls that would merely fetch £6 when pledged!

I may quote a few lines from M. Brun's evidence:

"M. Steinheil asked me . . . to pledge at the Mont-de-Piété a pearl necklace of several rows . . . On the same day, at the office in the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux, I pledged the necklace, in my name, and received, I believe, 150 francs (£6)."

(*Dossier* Cote 1929)

Now, as every one knows, the Mont-de-Piété is a State Institution, and its books are kept in the same thorough and methodical manner as that of all other State "Administrations." The Mont-de-Piété, in reply to inquiries ordered by M. André replied that:

". . . The pledging of a pearl necklace (whether by the Steinheils or by M. Brun) was not mentioned in their books . . ."

(*Dossier* Cote 1919)

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The pearls were not mentioned in the final report of M. André, nor in the Indictment, nor were they once referred to at my trial. Can any one blame me if I say I have always thought that "the authorities" *knew* about the necklace but *did not want* that mystery to be unravelled, no more than they wanted to know that some of the jewels stolen on the night of the crime came from a President, and two, at least, from an Attorney-General. I have also always thought that "the authorities" knew that I possessed important documents and the Memoirs of Félix Faure. True, by order, I never spoke of them except to M. Desmoulin, the Director of the Prison, my counsel, and Pastor Arboux—and I just pronounced the word "documents" before M. Leydet and M. Hamard—but whether the authorities knew about them or not, I can only say that no mention of them was made to me.

At Saint-Lazare, one day—at the time of that long and nerve-racking *Instruction*—two municipal guards came to take me to the Palace of Justice.

I said to the gaoler: "Where are 'my' inspectors?"

"Madame," the man replid, "it is no longer M. Hamard who sends for you, but M. André, the judge, and M. André, it seems, has given new instructions."

The non-commissioned officer very politely made me enter a *fiacre* (a four-wheeled cab). He then sat down near me, and the other soldier sat opposite me. Both had revolvers at their side. The carriage started on its journey.

"Why have not the inspectors come, as usual?" I asked.

"Ah! Madame, we don't know. . . . Your judge doesn't seem to like you." . . .

"I hope not; I cannot believe that." . . .

As we neared the Palace of Justice, I noticed that the driver was not taking us the usual way. The non-commissioned officer said: "We are going round to the Boulevard du Palais," and when, seeing that I was not being driven to the *Dépôt*, I asked where he was taking me, he replied, after much hesitation: "To the *Souricière* (the Mouse-Trap)."

"What!" I exclaimed in fearful dismay, "you mean to say

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that I am going to be shut up in one of those cages, like a beast? . . . Is the women's *Souricière* like that of the men?"

"Yes. Madame . . . You will have to wait there until the Judge is ready to receive you." . . . And with great gentleness, the man added: "We have lost a great deal of time on our way to Saint-Lazare, and fetched you as late as possible, so that you will not have to wait long."

I thanked the officer, entered through the "new" door, and was taken through low, damp, cold passages to the *Souricière*. Saint-Lazare is bad enough, Heaven knows; the *Dépôt* worse, but the *Souricière* is an abomination. Let the reader imagine two rows of cages, one on top of the other, and with steps to reach the upper row. Opposite, on a kind of platform, sits a Sister, who can see through the iron bars of each case the prisoners of both rows of cages.

When she saw me, the Sister on duty, Sœur Berthe, a very old, sweet-eyed sister, tottered towards me and took me to one of the empty cages.

When I say cages, I am not exaggerating. Each cage, unspeakably filthy and foul-smelling, is about seven feet high, five feet long, and three feet wide. The door forms one wall, as it were; the upper half is a square hole barred from side to side and from top to bottom. Air enters through this hole, which has no glass. The door opens from the outside.

I had not been in "my" cage for one minute before I was ill, and I had to remain there, frozen, dejected and ill, from nine o'clock—for, by a refinement of cruelty, M. André had sent early for me at Saint-Lazare—until noon. Women in other cages, near me and above me, shouted at me. They could not see one another, but they had all witnessed my arrival through the bars of their "windows"; somehow, they knew who I was and the insults I heard at Saint-Lazare were hurled at me again! Sometimes, one woman just to contradict the others, would take my part and scream at the top of her voice: "I tell you she is a kid (*une gosse*), and kids haven't what's needed to strangle a man and a woman! Shut up, you fools!" Fierce quarrels ensued, from cage to cage. Every woman shouted and thumped on "her" walls. The whole flimsy structure of the "Mouse-Trap" shook ominously . . . and Sister

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Berthe on her platform went on knitting quietly, without raising her head. She had witnessed such scenes ever since she had been on duty at the *Souricière*, and did not even take notice. After a time, the women quieted down, and I heard them say to the Sister: "I am hungry. . . . Give me a cigarette. That deceives hunger. . . . We all know you have cigarettes!" And the kind old Sister sometimes handed them cigarettes through the bars!

I heard afterwards that those wretched women often had to wait in those foul cages for eight or nine hours for the Examining-Magistrate or the prison van—which they call the *panier à salade* (salad-basket).

Eight or nine hours in a cage! . . . I thought of an examining-magistrate, M. L., whom I had known years ago. He was a great admirer of mine, and frequently forsook his duties to come and pay me compliments or to listen to some music in my salon. . . . And I thought him a charming man!

Now, I realised that whenever he wasted time at my house the woman, perhaps several women, had had to wait in a cage, hour after hour, until his return, and I felt bitterly ashamed of myself for not having guessed that a magistrate, like a doctor, has patients who cannot, who must not, wait.

I waited only three hours in my cage! But when I entered M. André's Cabinet, I felt more dead than alive, and I said to him: "You will not see me again. You sent for me at Saint-Lazare hours too soon. I have spent three hours at the *Souricière*, and I understand that it was owing to an order given by you. How can you expect me to answer your questions, after what I have just passed through?"

On three occasions, before *Instructions*, I was locked up in a cage at the "Mouse-Trap," and from nine in the morning till seven or eight at night I had to go without any kind of food. But after those three times I looked so weak and haggard, I have been told, that M. André cancelled his order, and once more I was placed in a cell at the *Dépôt*, pending the *Instruction*, and once more the Sister Superior with the Madonna face wrapped me about with her radiant kindness, comforting me with her sweet, wise words, and the divine light that shone in her eyes.

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CHAPTER XXVI

THE LAST "INSTRUCTION"

I WILL now quote almost in full the final *Instruction*, which took place on March 13th, 1909. I cannot well conceive a more intensely poignant and dramatic document, and after over two years, when I re-read it, I can hardly believe that those *Questions* were put to me, and that the *Answers* were those I made, in the room of an Examining Magistrate, who accused me of having murdered my husband and my mother.

"On March 13th, 1909, before us, André, has been brought the widow Steinheil."

Question. "With the reservations and the restrictions with which we acquainted you during your previous interrogatory, Dr. Balthazard has expressed the opinion that the *crime cannot have been committed by one person alone.* In any case, the evidence, as a whole, seems to establish the fact of your personal participation in the crime, and we have, to-day, in an interrogatory which we consider as being the final one, to recall to your mind, the various presumptions and charges which have been brought against you."

Answer. "I protest to you with all my soul that I am innocent, and that you have in your dossier the proof of my innocence."

Question. "In what can you protest that we have any proof?"

Answer. "People do not kill without some compelling reason; now, you are aware that I adored my mother, and that I have lived on quite good terms with my husband for eighteen years."

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Question. "On November 26th, at the time of the proceedings against Rémy Couillard, you attributed the crime to Alexandre Wolff, whilst on the same day, when describing the circumstances in which Wolff acted, you have made different and contradictory statements, then, you have made a retractation. Besides, the investigations that have been made about Alexandre Wolff did not justify the suspicions against him."

Answer. "As I have explained, I imagined, under the influence of journalists who had unhinged my mind, all that I said about Wolff. I repeat once more that Wolff is innocent."

Question. "From the outset until November 26th, then constantly ever since, you have attributed the crime to four individuals—three men and one red-haired woman—all four dressed in long black gowns, and the men wearing hats with high crowns and wide brims."

Answer. "I change nothing in my statements on this point."

Question. "At the beginning of the investigations, two different facts seemed to corroborate your narrative. On June 2nd, a letter bearing the signature of a certain 'Arthur Rewer' whose identity it has been impossible to establish, was sent to the *Sûreté.* It asserted that on the night of May 30–31st, about 12.45 A.M., four men and a red-haired woman left the Impasse Ronsin. Also, the discovery in a carriage of the *Metropolitan,* on the evening of May 31st, of an invitation card to the recent exhibition of your husband's paintings together with a visiting card torn in two pieces, which bore a few addresses, took the *Sûreté* to Guilbert the costumier, and led one to believe that the black gowns you said were worn by the assassins, might have been stolen from a basket of costumes supplied by this Guilbert to the Hebrew Theatre during the afternoon of May 30th.

"But the Rewer letter has lost most of its importance on account of a second letter, obviously written by the same person and dated January 6th, 1909, in which it is stated that the five persons mentioned in the letter of June 2nd, might just as well have been coming from a house close to the Impasse Ronsin. Besides nothing has ever proved that Arthur Rewer did not merely see some peaceful passers by. Now, as regards

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the gowns stolen at the Hebrew Theatre, this is the last stage of the investigations: the disappearance of the black gowns was discovered with certainty only on May 31st, for there are contradictions between the evidence of Finberg on December 28th, and that of Sumart on March 2nd, concerning the state of the costume basket, and *it has not been proved at all that the theft took place on Nov. 30th* (!) Besides, even if the theft took place on that same day, there were only two black gowns stolen—according to Riegel's evidence on February 25th, and it is certain that no hats with wide brims were stolen (!) Finally, the fact could be *the better considered as a mere coincidence, without connection with the crime*, since disappearances of costumes seem to have often taken place at the Hebrew Theatre, especially in 1908.

"During our investigations, however, we have—under the influence of the very grave signs of your personal guilt—wondered whether the theft at the Hebrew Theatre—admitting its reality from May 31st—and the leaving in the underground of the documents we have mentioned, had not been *arranged at your instigation*, or at that of any other accomplice in the crime *in order to give some likelihood to the description you were going to make of the crime*." (!)

Answer. "I maintain all my statements. I have always drawn—I still draw—from my conscience, the strength to bear all this mystery. It has always seemed to me as if, thanks to that card of invitation to the exhibition of his works, my husband himself were telling me from his tomb: 'All that you have said is true. Have the courage to discover the murderers.'"

Question. "Your story of the four personages in the black gowns retains all its *romantic unlikeliness and incredibility* emphasised by the *fantastic* idea of criminals, who, in their inexplicable plan to mask their clothes and not their faces, decided to entangle themselves, when carrying out the most delicate criminal operations, in the pampering folds of gowns, the sleeves of which fell over their hands (!) We have, none the less, constantly, and to the end, allowed an open field for your investigations, even as regards the reality and the iden-

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tity of the four persons you described. All *your* efforts in this line have been no more successful than those which were made during the first months of the inquiries."

(Which amounted to nothing more or less than telling me: *you* have been unable to find *who* these assassins were, therefore, you are the assassin.)

Answer. "I can only repeat what I said at the very start to M. Hamard, in all sincerity, about the men and the red-haired woman I saw, and saw well, around my bed in the circumstances I have described.

"You think it unlikely that the men would have put on hampering gowns in order to steal. Yet, in the murder of M. Remi, which happened eight days after the double murder in the Impasse Ronsin, the murderers were stark naked. That is not more extraordinary than the men in the black gowns. Yet, had I said the assassins were entirely naked, you no doubt would have called me a mad and hysterical woman!"

Question. "Above all we must examine the following point: Is there any real cause to believe that the crime was a *banal*, commonplace one, committed by vulgar burglars. The answer to this question, it appears to us, should be in the negative, and we will say why. Had the crime been the work of ordinary malefactors, it could, logically, have had no other aim than robbery. Now—even admitting the *reality* of any theft at your house, on that night—the malefactors would not have left behind abundant and conspicuous booty in the rooms they visited . . . (Here M. André repeated the list of the valuables left in their places by the murderers.) It is absolutely inadmissible that malefactors who had come to steal would have left a sum of 130 francs (£5 4s.) and so many jewels. Besides, it seems that the burglary was merely a sham, as one may still realise from the photographs in the dossier where one could see the various objects on the ground, scattered in too good order—which does not fit in with the great hurry inherent in all burglaries. . . .

"Further, it was established by the expert ropemaker, M. Chafaroux, on June 16th, that the cord which was used to

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strangle your husband was taken from the ball of cord in the cupboard of your kitchen; and it is quite evident that the gag of wadding with which your mother was suffocated, and the one which, according to your statements, was used to gag you, came from the parcels of cotton-wool which, on January 14th and 16th, you said were in the rooms on the first floor of your house.

"How can one believe that ordinary criminals would have relied on chance to find (in your house) the instruments for their double homicide and their attempt on your life! Finally, what reason could they have had to spare you? To allow you to survive was to allow a dangerous witness to survive!"

Answer. "It is impossible for me to give you explanation of all this. I can only and simply repeat what I heard and saw. That I was taken for my daughter is not surprising, although it has made so many people smile, since I looked young in those days, and was occuying my daughter's room. Besides, can one say that those murderers really spared me when one thinks of the way they bound me and of how they struck me on the head? Innocent, yes, I am innocent. I had no reason whatever to kill my husband and my mother. I am innocent."

Question. "The various reasons which lead one to eliminate the version of assassins who came to rob constitute as many reasons to believe that the crime was a 'domestic' one. And *since you have survived the crime in very peculiar circumstances; since, concerning all the details connected with the crime, you have accumulated 'unlikelihoods,' contradictions and lies; since you had a personal interest in the crime, the revelation has gradually been made evident that you took a direct part in the crime.*"

Answer. "I have taken no part whatever in the crime. Why, why, should I have done so?"

Question. "Not only did you survive, but you had only the *appearance* of a victim. The way you were bound . . . was quite harmless, quite *complaisant.* The cords left no trace round your neck, and mere transient traces on your wrists and ankles. . . . It is surely not with such mildness that male-

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factors capable of committing a double murder would have bound you to your bed."

Answer. "It is impossible for me to explain to you what took place in the minds of those monsters. Perhaps they thought I was bound tightly enough. In any case if, as you believe it, I took some part in the crime and had an accomplice, I should surely have had enough intelligence and presence of mind to have had myself treated with more severity, since I am being reproached with the fact that I remained alive!"

(M. André then mentioned the various bruises found on my body and remarked that they were very slight.)

Answer. "I have no need to reply to all this. If I bore no external marks, I suffered internally to such an extent that I was dangerously ill for two months, as you may find in your own dossier." . . .

Question. "Beside the very significative absence of real violence, the persistent effort you made to hide facts accuses you. At the very beginning of, and throughout the inquiry you declared that you had never seen the alpenstock and the glove found in the boudoir, but our investigations have made it appear *quite likely* that the alpenstock was one of the accessories in your husband's studio. And it has been proved that the glove (a man's glove) had been given you." . . .

Answer. "I never saw the alpenstock in the studio or elsewhere in the house; and granting the glove had belonged to M. Ch. I didn't remember it. (I sometimes asked my friends for their old gloves which I used when I had to cut flowers, to paint certain objects or do some rough work.) Had I remembered that alpenstock and that glove, I should have hastened to say so; I had no reason not to do so."

Question. "You said the violence you had suffered at the hands of the assassins was one of the causes of your illness. We reminded you how little convincing were the external signs of that violence. As for the nervous agitation which was evident in you—the fact is undeniable—after and since the drama, *the moral shock of your participation in the crime, the very weight of so heavy a 'penal' responsibility, anxiety*

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on account of the investigations—would be quite sufficient to explain it." . . .

(M. André evidently forgot that I felt so little those "anxieties on account of the investigations" that month after month, I urged the police to renew their efforts, and even sought the assistance of the Press, when I heard that the solution of the Impasse Ronsin murder mystery was being given up! After discussing once more the question of the gag and the stolen money and jewels, I had once more to explain that the expert had evidently not examined the piece of wadding which had been in my mouth, and also why I had five of my jewels altered by M. Souloy. But M. André merely remarked:)

"You have lied always and about everything. . . . To such an attitude there is but one explanation: you tried to ward off suspicions, and therefore you took a direct part in the murder."

Answer. "You want to find lies in everything. If I spoke some untruths, it was solely to conceal certain facts of my private life, certain 'friendships' I had had."

(The next remark of the examining magistrate was a fantastic one:)

Question. "It is interesting to observe, at any rate, as an oddity, that your story of the crime and the *mise en scène* appears to bear the stamp of your own imagination. For the tale of the black gowns sounds very much like reminiscence of the personages in several of your late husband's pictures. On the other hand several of the details bear a striking likeness to the incidents in a famous murder case which took place at Montbéliard in 1885, when you were sixteen years old, and which fascinated the population of that district where you were then living."

Answer. "I could not have lost my reason to the extent of saying I had seen men in black gowns if it had not been true. The personages in my husband's paintings, to which you refer, wear black gowns, which look in no way like the ecclesiastical gowns, plain, straight, and with tight-fitting sleeves, which the murderers wore. As for the Montbéliard murder case

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you mention, I don't remember it; I have never even heard of it at all. At home we [the young girls] did not read the newspapers. Montbéliard is an hour's distance from Beaucourt; I went there for my piano lessons. . . . I also learned painting at Montbéliard. . . . I drove there or went by rail. . . . I have never heard of that murder."

(M. André then proceeded to "prove" my guilt by the fact that I had got rid of "Turk," the borrowed dog, and that I had enticed my mother to come to my house at the end of May, and had prevented her from going to Bellevue, to which accusation I replied by stating once more the real facts, fully corroborated by our doctor.)

". . . On Saturday, May 30th, it was at the last moment, when I saw that my mother could not stand on her legs, that we decided not to go to Bellevue to sleep."

Question. "As regards the problem of finding out *why* you premeditated the murder, not only of your husband but also of your mother, and if you had a direct *rôle* in those murders: the solution appears to lie in the 'moral preoccupation' you had at the time. . . ."

(And M. André tried to prove that, being financially embarrassed, disliking my husband, and having constant quarrels with both him and my mother, I had thought of becoming the wife of M. Bdl., that a divorce being out of the question on account of M. Bdl.'s ideas, and also on account of M. Buisson's, on the matter, the "disappearance" of my husband and my mother had appeared to me as settling all difficulties and satisfying all my ambitions. . . .)

Answer. "You are fiercely persecuting an unfortunate woman! Neither with my husband nor my mother have I ever had a quarrel or a disagreement. My husband and I had not lived together as husband and wife for the past fifteen years, and I enjoyed by his side a liberty which a divorce could not have increased. M. Bdl. did not wish to marry again. Besides, I don't think I would have married him, for he was terribly jealous. Besides, in his evidence, I believe he has said himself that at the beginning of May 1908 he had already decided not to see us [my husband and me] any more. . . . I

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had no reason whatever to kill my husband and my mother. . . . No one will ever believe that when they see from the letters which are 'under seal' what I was to my mother, and what she was to me. You say we were financially embarrassed in 1908, but that year was precisely the one in which my husband earned the most. . . . My husband was quite satisfied with everything I did, and as for me, I didn't interfere with his life, but left him quite free. We had been for ten years on intimate terms with the Buissons, and both M. Buisson and his wife could assert that there never was any kind of quarrel between my husband and me. . . . At the time of the drama I was happy, as I had not been for a long time before my husband's return to health, because of my daughter's happiness on account of her engagement to Pierre Buisson, and I because of her father's happiness. . . ."

Question. "During the three months after the drama, events twice foiled your plans. Perturbed by the suspicions which existed against you in so many minds, M. Bdl. and also the Buisson family moved away, and kept away from you. In those circumstances, not only Marthe's future as you conceived it, but also your ambitions in regard to M. Bdl. ran serious risks of being irretrievably compromised. Hence, unless you were to allow a large portion of the advantages of the double murder to escape, the urgent necessity of a justification before public opinion. Hence, on October 30th, the daring move of your letter to the *Echo de Paris*, that is your claim, made publicly, for a prolongation of the inquiries, and of the search for the murderers of your husband and your mother. And since that prolongation has led to the revelations of your guilt, *your attitude simply shows that you had the temerity to go as far as you could in your purpose of winning and enjoying, somehow or other, and at any cost, the fruits of your double crime.*"

Answer. "No! On the contrary, you have there a proof of my innocence! If I had had anything on my conscience, I should not have re-started the case, bravely, without fear of any one. No! If I had been guilty, I should not have had such temerity! A man would not have dared because men

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are cowards, and a woman would not have dared because women are too weak."

Question. "*The result of the proceedings is that you are accused:*

Firstly: *Of having, in Paris, during the night of May 30th–31st, 1908, voluntarily dealt death to M. Steinheil;*

And that with premeditation.

Secondly: *Of having, in the same circumstances, time and place, voluntarily dealt death to Madame Edouard Japy, your legitimate mother.*"

Answer. "It is an abominable and monstrous accusation, I protest against it with all my soul, and I beg with all my heart those who will be called upon to examine and judge your Dossier, I beg them in the name of my child to realise, to see, that I could not have murdered either my husband or my mother. No, I cannot be accused of such an infamous, abominable crime. There is nothing in my life which could explain such a deed on my part." . . .

"The accused cries and sobs."

(This document has been) "Read—Have signed:

"WIDOW STEINHEIL.
"SIMON.
"ANDRÉ."

(*Dossier* Cote 3433)

. . . "She cries, she sobs," says the report of the final *Instruction.* Just four little words, but what deep grief and suffering they represent!

In these reports, the words spoken by the prisoner are very seldom exactly reproduced, for this reason: the Judge has before him a list of questions which he has carefully prepared beforehand; he asks the questions one by one, and dots down rapidly the prisoner's answers, or, at least, what he considers the essential part of those answers. Afterwards, using his notes, he dictates both his question and the reply of the prisoner to his *greffier* . . . with the result that very often the whole report seems to have been written by the same person, so similar in style are the questions and the answers. As

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a rule, at my *Instruction*, I did not even listen when the Judge dictated to M. Simon. During those few minutes of peace, which occurred every ten or fifteen minutes, I rested and collected my thoughts. . . . At the final and momentous *Instruction*, however, when all the *Instructions* were reviewed, I tried, although it was the most harrowing of them all, and I was more exhausted than ever, to listen to the words M. André dictated to M. Simon, and time after time I explained that he was not dictating the exact words I had used, or that he cut short my replies. I repeated what I had said, and generously the examining magistrate consented to alter those "trifling details," as he put it.

In spite of this, however, such a report does not convey the pathos and the tragic importance of the proceedings.

In spite of all I had said and done, in spite of all facts which proved my innocence—that innocence which the jury were to realise and proclaim *eight months later*—M. André, who had thought me guilty from the first, refused to alter his opinion, and coolly and with a faint smile of self-satisfaction, declared to me that I was accused of having murdered my husband and my mother!

M. Simon had tears in his eyes. My counsel stood near me fearing that I should faint. I made a superhuman effort and rose.

I signed my name at the foot of the last page of that terrible *Instruction;* I handed the pen to M. Simon, and then M. André signed. As I passed out before him, on my way back to the *Dépôt*, and thence to Saint-Lazare, the Judge, against whom I had fought for my life for so many days, quietly said to me: "Au revoir, Madame." He lighted a cigarette and jauntily left the room, greatly satisfied with himself.

A judge, he apparently did not know that "good faith is the foundation of Justice."

He had achieved a great piece of work. Although there existed no proofs of my guilt whatever, he had succeeded—or so he thought—in building up out of flimsy fragments of circumstantial evidence, out of vague assertions and vague assumptions, out of childish contradictions, and above all, out

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of his own preconceptions, a solid, impregnable charge of double murder against an unhappy, defenceless, nerve-wracked and innocent woman.

Decidedly, he felt, life was a grand thing, the *Instruction* a sublime institution and an examining magistrate a saviour of society. . . . And M. André was sure of promotion now!

Like so many judges I have known—and my address-book alone, which was seized at the time of my arrest but has never been returned to me in spite of many applications for it, could supply the number of all the magistrates who eagerly attended my receptions and told me ancedotes about their careers and their work!—M. André suffered from that illness which Brieux, in "La Robe Rouge" (the Red Robe), has aptly called, "the fever of promotion, which turns so many honest men into bad Judges."

M. André *was* promoted.

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The exact contents of this petition may interest the reader, inasmuch as it reveals various facts in connection with the crime, which I have hardly mentioned so far:

(No. 342) March 8th, 1909. *Monsieur le Juge d'Instruction.*

"Following public opinion, which is so terribly against me but which, when it is better informed, will necessarily become again generous and just, you have considered me a monstrous criminal. I have endured your ten interrogatories, your sixty hours of questions, without flinching, and have always asserted my innocence. You have not believed me—could not believe me after all the foolish or extravagant things I have said and done, and have been made to say and do—(this last sentence was dictated to me by my counsel, who suggested that it would not be wise to be too aggressive). My narrative of the crime seemed to you, as to other people, fantastic and unacceptable; I was the only culprit, or I had an accomplice whom I had influenced, or by whom I had been influenced! The assassins, *Monsieur le Juge*, were those I said, and their number was the number I gave. And it is your own experts in their reports, your dossier in its final state, which prove it. I, the only criminal! To think that such a gross and abnominable idea should be held for one moment! Why? To make it hang together it has been necessary to introduce the theory of a sleeping-draught or of some poison! Now, after the expert, Dr. Ogier, had declared that the bodies of the victims contained no trace of narcotic or poison, comes Dr. Balthazard, who supplies this irresistible argument: that my husband and my mother were so little poisoned, so little under the influence of a narcotic, that the latter got out of her bed and that the former rose and walked to the bath-room, both victims having incontrovertibly been killed at the spot and in the position in which their bodies were found. Thus is destroyed the odious hypothesis of the 'Tragic Widow,' giver of poison or narcotic, and slayer, with her own hands and without help, of her husband and mother.

"There remains the hypothesis according to which I am still guilty, but had the assistance of an accomplice. Without in-

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sisting on the imprudence entailed by the choice of any accomplice—an inadmissible imprudence as you perceived, since you have continuously and persistently regarded me as the only culprit—which facts in regard to this theory has the *Instruction* brought out? None. And yet it is not for lack of investigations and clues; your dossiers are full of inquiries concerning all the persons who knew me, from my most distant acquaintances to my own brother. That is not all, and here again Reason and Science supply some information. M. Bertillon and Dr. Balthazard have succeeded in ascertaining the following facts: the small clock, surely handled by one of the assassins and thrown into a cupboard, bears finger-prints which have not been identified; the brandy bottle used a few hours before the crimes for the grogs, brought up almost full in the evening and found almost empty on the morning after the crime, bears numerous unidentified finger-prints, especially around the neck, as if the murderers had drunk from the bottle. On the carpet a number of ink-spots were found, which came from the pool of ink in the *boudoir* (where the murderers knocked over the ink-stand on the desk which contained the money and the dummy bundle of documents); those spots had dropped from the edge of some flowing garment, which could not have been one of mine, since I had undressed on the Saturday night in the bath-room, and since my clothes were found there on the Sunday morning, without any ink-spots on them or under the hem. To whom did this long loose garment, to whom did that gown which left its traces on the carpet, belong? Was it not to the woman I denounced, or to one of the murderers dressed as I have said? An ink-spot was found on my knee—was it not made by one of the men when binding me to the bed?" . . .

(Then, I showed how the gowns stolen at the Hebrew Theatre must have been those worn by the murderers, and I mentioned the extraordinary and all-important discovery of the cards in the Underground, the day after the crime, cards which pointed to the Hebrew Theatre and to the "stolen gowns.")

. . . "Allow me to add that four letters which are in the

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Dossier corroborate my narrative: Two letters from a certain Arthur Rewer, one of which is dated June 2nd, three days after the crime, a letter posted at Boulogne-sur-Seine, and the fourth written by an Italian woman and sent from Oporto (Portugal). You have assuredly attached some importance to them, especially to the two Rewer letters, since you appointed an expert in handwriting and ordered all kinds of investigations and inquiries. Now, in his letter of June 2nd, Arthur Rewer declared that on the night of the crime, he had seen, and even followed (at about 12.30 A.M.), four men (I only saw three men on the fatal night, but the fourth evidently kept watch downstairs) and a woman who left the Impasse Ronsin with bags. And the writer gave a description of these people which tallied with my own! I am endeavouring to submit to your high conscience proofs of my own innocence taken from your dossier, and how many other proofs there are which make my guilt impossible! And, reminding you how much, for my own life and for my daughter I needed my husband, reminding you of my love for my mother I protest to you once more: I am innocent!

"Besides, what motive could have led me to commit such a ghastly crime? It was not a desire to be free to marry, since the person you know of, would not and could not marry again for eight years! (M. Bdl. has often said, and to others beside me, that he would never give a step-mother to his children, and that before marrying again, he would wait till they were all grown up, which meant about eight years.) For financial reasons? How could one admit it, since, if the death of my mother brought me a small income, my husband's deprived me of one far larger! As regards the jewels which I declare to have been stolen, you know that, contrary to the news spread abroad, it has been impossible to find a single one, outside the four jewels I myself handed to M. Souloy on June 12th, as I have already told M. Leydet, and also that not one of my mother's jewels taken by the murderers, has been discovered.

"That is why, *Monsieur le Juge*, at the present stage of the *Instruction*, I ask you to give me back my child, and to put

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On the same day, through the kindness of a Benevolent Society, buns were distributed among the prisoners, and it was pathetic to watch their joy . . . and heartrending to see some of the mothers take the buns given to the children, and devour them while the little ones screamed with disappointment. Certain women in prison reach such a state of degradation that they even lose their motherly instincts! . . .

After the *Instruction* was over, Sister Léonide entered my cell one day, and said: "The Director wishes me to ask you for one of your boots . . . M. Hamard has applied for that." I complied with this strange request, but send a message to my counsel asking him to lodge a complaint against such arbitrary treatment. The *Instruction* was over. I had a right to be left in peace.

A few days later, Maître Aubin came to the prison. I had never seen him so jovial or beaming. He laughed so much that he could hardly speak. At last he spluttered out: "It's too funny, really! . . . The *Substitut*, the *Procureur*, and other magistrates, are all studying the dossier of your case. I suppose they are very much annoyed, since it clearly reveals your innocence. They probably don't see how they are going to draw up an indictment with the material at their disposal. . . . . They wondered, and suddenly they exclaimed: 'The boot: We will catch her by the boot!' . . .

"You don't understand? Nor did I, at first! well, it appears that on one of the photographs, taken after the crime, of the floors in your apartments, one can see a mark left by a heel. The boots of all who were suspected of having any connection with the crime have been examined—in vain. Then, they sent for one of your boots. It was at once seen that the all-important heel-mark could not have been yours. But wait! The end of the story is the most humorous part of it: they have found, beyond any doubt, that the mark was made by the heel of the very photographer who photographed the floor!"

Maître Aubin checked his hilarity, and in an earnest tone added: "Ah, Madame, I almost hope the *non-lieu* (no bill) you expect will not be granted you. I know it sounds terrible

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cumstances, whilst murdering one's own mother and husband is unspeakably monstrous."

"Of course it is," I said; "but how do you know she *did* murder her husband and her mother?"

"Why! The French newspapers said so. Besides, had she been innocent, they would not have tried her for her life!"

"But she was acquitted . . ."

"Yes, yes . . . quite so! . . . All the same, beware of this person, Madame, should you meet her again . . ."

Since then, I have often been in that drawing-room; the host, the hostess, and all their friends know now who I am, and I believe that although I am not a "fatal" woman, they would give their own life for me. To win them to me, I had merely to be—myself. They knew me, and yet I have only told them a very small part of my life-story. I hope and believe that all those who once condemned me without hesitation, and thought that I was guilty, just because "the French newspapers said so," will, after reading this painful account of my life and my "case," learn at last to forget the "Tragic," or "Red Widow," and to know, and, I trust, sympathise with, a woman who suffered unjustly the worst of martyrdoms.

Firmin left Saint-Lazare a short time after my last *Instruction.*

When she heard the great, the wonderful news, Firmin exclaimed: "Oh! Madame. . . . And I hoped so much you would be free long before me!" She was sorry, intensely sorry; not to leave the prison, of course, but to part from me. She packed her few belongings silently, then, when the moment of saying good-bye had come, Firmin came to me and said: "Madame, say you will grant me something . . . something I want to ask you and yet don't like to ask."

"Yes, Firmin, I promise."

The poor young woman, with whom, for so many weeks, I had lived in the same cell, eaten the same food, shared the same thoughts, the same sorrows and the same hopes, hesitated a long time, and then at last, turning a little paler, muttered: "I would like to kiss you before I go, Madame." . . . She kissed my cheek, and I kissed hers, and then she hurried

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away. The heavy door which had been opened was shut; I was alone in that terrible cell, and I fell on my knees, and sobbed, crying that word which I repeated day after day: Why? . . . why? . . .

Another prisoner took Firmin's place. She was a woman whom misery and an awful illness had made sour, hypocritical, and treacherous. She remained only a few weeks with me, but when she left Saint-Lazare I heard that she went about selling samples of my work—which I had not given her—and had also tried to sell "stories" about me. . . .

A few hours after that poor woman's departure, Sister Léonide entered my cell.

"I have good news for you," she began. "Your future companion, whose name is Juliette, is a kind, able, active woman. She will be here with you this afternoon. I know Juliette well. She is a good woman, full of excellent qualities, but she is a thief. I suppose it is in her blood. She has been here very often, and I can assure you that you will have never been looked after so well as you will be by Juliette. She was a teacher once. She can talk, and she is well read and well mannered. And then, she has plenty of courage. She will not bewail her fate night and day like our poor little Firmin, but will try to cheer and comfort you. Juliette was recently sentenced to several years' imprisonment. They put her downstairs, but the other women hated her and even threatened to kill her, because she said she was convinced of your innocence. That did not stop her. Day after day since her arrival here she has asked to share your cell, and her request has been granted. And now, please, thank Sister Léonide, Madame!"

She spoke these last words in that loud, deep voice which she assumed when she wished to make me laugh.

Juliette came in. I had quite a surprise. Jacq and Firmin were small and slim; Juliette was very tall and stout. One could see at a glance that she was a clean woman. She looked about thirty-six years old. Her thick dark hair was perfectly tidy, her nails well kept. Her complexion was fresh and healthy. She was not beautiful, but there was a pleas-

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MY CELL

(Juliette, my fellow-prisoner, seated on her bed)

A sketch by Mme. Steinheil

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ant, winning expression in her face. She exchanged a few remarks with Sister Léonide, and I at once realised that Juliette had education and even refinement. How could such a woman have become a thief! . . .

She read the question in my eyes, and after the Sister had left the cell, she said to me: "Madame, don't think too badly of me. You don't know . . . you cannot imagine . . . I was brought up by parents who worshipped me. They were not rich, but they were able to give me a good, sound education, and I became a teacher." . . . She told me the names of a few of the families by whom she had been employed, and among them was that of a Director at the Ministry of Finance whom I knew very well. . . . She had a daughter of fifteen who was her all in all.

"Living in contact with wealthy people when I was a young governess," Juliette explained naïvely, "and belonging myself to a good family, I grew used to comfort and luxury, and I wanted comfort and luxury not only for myself, but also for my husband and my daughter. Then, one day while I was shopping, I saw a well-dressed woman slip some lace into a pocket hidden in her wide sleeves. . . . That lace must have been worth several pounds a yard. . . . I told this to a woman I knew, to whom I sold things when I needed money. . . . She said at once to me: 'I'll pay you handsomely for anything you bring me.' I tried; I was successful. In one week I had earned twenty times the amount I could have earned in one year as a teacher. . . . Then there was the joy of lavishing pretty things on my daughter, and the awful and wonderful fascination, too, of stealing." . . .

Juliette read consternation on my face, but went on: "I assure you, Madame, I am not a bad woman. . . . And think of the awful risks I have to take! I have been caught. I am away from those I love, and I shall be here for years!"

Sister Léonide was right when she said Juliette would prove a most devoted companion. The *Instruction* had worn me out, and the prison doctor was seriously alarmed about my health. . . . Juliette saw at once that I was in a bad way, and when, the next morning, I started washing our cell, she

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snatched the cloth from my hand, carried me bodily to my bed, rolled up her sleeves over her mighty arms and, without a word, started scrubbing the tiles. Then she scrubbed the tables and cleaned the shelves on the wall. Afterwards, she carried me to another bed, looked at my sheets, and said: "You can't sleep in these!"

"There are no others in the prison, Juliette."

"Oh! yes there are! Just let me arrange things. I have been here so often. . . . I know the place only too well, unfortunately!"

At Sister Léonide's next visit, Juliette asked if she might change my sheets in the linen-room.

"But all the prison sheets are alike!" said the Sister.

"I know that, *ma sœur*. Only some are new and some are old. I want to find the oldest pair there is. The older sheets are the thinner and the smoother they are." And she added mischievously: "I know all about sheets, I have stolen so many in my life!" . . .

Juilette soon returned with a pair of sheets that were full of holes. She mended them, and when I went to bed, later on, she said triumphantly: "Well, what does it feel like now, Madame?"

The change was indeed wonderful; I told Juliette so, and she clapped her hands with delight.

Juliette was intelligent, but by living in contact with somewhat suspicious characters she had acquired a strange personality: she sometimes spoke like a lady of high intellectual attainments, but as a rule her remarks were those of a woman without much education or instruction. She would read aloud a chapter from some book—yellow and grimy with the marks of hundreds of hands, for it was borrowed from the prison library—Victor Hugo's "Notre Dame," for instance, and express original views on life in the Middle Ages; then, for the rest of the day, she would tell fortunes by cards. She raved about cards, and was amazingly superstitious. . . . With bits of paper and a pencil she had made for herself a pack of "cards," and would spend hours reading her fortune in them! She grew so feverish over those cards that I smiled sometimes.

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"Ah! Madame," she exclaimed: "Don't laugh! Cards know everything and tell everything. . . . You look! I'll start over again. Just now they said there is a fair woman near my husband and that he is going to travel. . . . Well, watch. . . . You see, this is my husband. . . . Now, there is that fair woman again, with him! . . . I wonder who the wretch is!" . . .

She disliked going to mass on Sundays, but loved to listen to Pastor Arboux when he visited me in my cell.

She talked to me about her daughter, and I told her about my own Marthe, whom I saw twice a week. I taught Juliette all kinds of needlework, so that, later on, she might spoil her daughter with pretty things without stealing them. She was quick and clever, and soon learned not only to do nice work, but to do it rapidly.

Meanwhile I did "tatting," or painted. The Sisters had supplied me with some colours and brushes, and I painted for them flowers and landscapes on scores of handkerchief-cases, cushions, glove-cases, and lamp-shades. . . . This was far less of a strain to my eyes, but it seemed strange to paint flowers in prison, where I never saw any.

The chaplain (Catholic) of the prison came often to see Juliette, whom he, too, had known for many years. I had seen him before, on one or two occasions when he had visited Firmin.

He was a man of about seventy-five, tall and handsome, still erect, and he spoke in a soft, kind voice. "It is not so much what he says that I like," Juliette once remarked, "as the way he says it." But what the chaplain, M. Doumergue, said was well worth hearing.

He had travelled in the Near East, and knew Palestine well. Sometimes after telling Juliette—and me, for I eagerly listened—one of the parables, he would describe the place where the Son of Man had probably spoken it.

I talked of music with him, for he had told me that he loved sacred and classic music. He called J. S. Bach the "father of music," and seemed to know every oratorio worthy of the name. I told him how much I loved the singing of the Sisters,

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and once paid him quite unconsciously a compliment: I remarked that the organ music on Sunday mornings in the large Catholic chapel of the prison, though pleasant, was quite different from the splendid, inspiring music I heard every Sunday afternoon after vespers. Surely it could not be the same organist.

The old chaplain replied very simply. "The organist, Madame, is the Sister of the *guichet* (wicket). She plays while I say Mass, but at the close of the afternoon I go to the chapel, and all alone there I play, improvising and letting myself go at the organ."

From that day the kind old chaplain played in the chapel whenever he could spare a moment, and thus gave me back one, at least, of the joys I was deprived of in prison—the intense joy of hearing good music.

He talked to me of the Catholic religion sometimes. He knew that my daughter had become a Catholic, and, in a broad-minded manner, told me about the greatness, the unity, and the moral power of the Catholic religion. . . .

Under his influence and M. Arboux's, I gradually found some peace of mind. Nothing could deaden my grief, but those two men killed all bitterness in me. I could not resign myself to the awful thought that I was accused of murder, but I considered it right that I should suffer for my past weaknesses, and for having denounced men without having real proof against them.

The wonderful example of the Sisters turned the pity I felt for the wretched women, who had so long insulted me, into sympathy and almost affection. . . . And a miracle—or at least I look upon it as a miracle—took place: The women soon ceased calling me a murderess, and shouting "Guillotine, guillotine!" at me. . . . They felt that I never returned their insults, and they gradually began to respect me. One day, one of them, while walking round the yard, cried: "I hope you will soon be free—you, up there!" Then another made a kind remark, then a third. . . . Another day a gypsy woman shouted: "Why don't you come down into the yard, we won't hurt you! Why should you rot in your cell, poor

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IN THE PRISON YARD AT SAINT LAZARE

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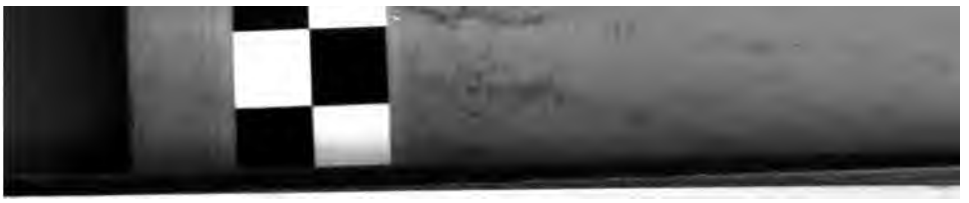

woman!" And another added: "We made a mistake about you, that's all!" . . .

The trees were budding, the sparrows and the pigeons were more cheerful; sun sometimes visited my cell. I had never realised so keenly the extraordinary comfort that Light means. The cell was less cold, the days were longer. . . . The women in the yard below came more frequently to do their washing in the basin, and there was no longer any ice to smash.

The children had learned to know me. Through the iron bars of my window I sent those little gypsies little paper packets containing tiny bits of chocolate which Marthe brought me, and they shouted: "Morning, Madame," and then threw kisses. Sometimes, on my way to the room where I saw Marthe or my counsel, I met some of those little bronzed, dark-haired children . . . their big eyes looked bigger than ever as they watched me. They followed me, and touched my dress, and said: "We love you, Madame."

The doctor ordered me to take an hour's exercise in the yard every day. I trembled a little when I went down. The fresh air intoxicated me and I faltered, but two or three prisoners rushed to my assistance. They spoke kindly to me and made me sit on the edge of the basin. . . . And these were the women who only a few weeks back had hurled shouts of execration at me whenever they saw me! After a few days I knew the story of each of them. One had sung and begged in the streets without a licence, another had stolen bread for her children, a third had stolen because she had been ordered to, a fourth had stabbed a policeman in order to save her "man" and give him a chance to escape. . . .

Sometimes, a woman who had been arrested only a day or two before started insulting me when she was told who I was, but the others at once stopped her, and soon afterwards the new prisoner came to me, timidly apologised, and, to my intense surprise, started telling me the latest news about my case. She had read the newspapers, she knew what was being said and rumoured. . . . And invariably the woman made things out to be brighter than they really were, just to give me hope and courage!

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I must not forget to mention "*Blanc-Blanc*" (white-white), Sister Léonide's cat. He was quite black save for a spot of white between the eyes. He followed the Sister everywhere, and when she entered my cell, he went under my bed. After Sister Léonide had gone, *Blanc-Blanc* made his appearance and touched me with his paw. I knew what that meant. Juliette took our only plate—"our Sèvres dinner service," as she called it—and we gave the cat some milk. When he heard the door being opened, he took up a place against the wall. Then, before the door was closed again, he slipped through and disappeared. Sister Léonide knew exactly where the cat had been, but she exclaimed: "I wonder where Blanc-Blanc has been spending the afternoon!" . . .

Juliette was vexed with the appearance of our cell. One morning she suddenly declared that she had found a way of improving it beyond description.

"We are going to make a beautiful couch!" she cried, and forthwith she pulled the straw mattresses off the spare beds—each mattress was just a bundle of straw inside a sack—and also the three straw bolsters (for there were five beds in our cell). She placed the mattresses one on top of another in the centre of the cell and covered the "couch" with a spare sheet, and in front of it we put the "dressing-room" table, which was now adorned not only with the photograph of my mother and my child, but also with one of Juliette's daughter. We sat down, feeling almost cheerful, on the improvised "bergère," and then . . . we heard the bolt of the door being drawn and the key being turned. Sister Léonide entered, followed by "our Mother." The former saw at once the piece of furniture we had added to our small stock, and it was all that she could do not to laugh. Then, "Our Mother" saw it too. . . . I forestalled the coming reproaches by taking the Sister Superior by the hand and making her sit on the *bergère*. She had to admit that it was considerably more comfortable than the hard beds and the rush chairs in the cell. . . . But prison rules were prison rules, and gloomily, Juliette and I started undoing our great work.

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Both "Our Mother" and Sister Léonide watched us despondently, and the former suddenly said: "Don't do it just yet. . . . Rest a little on the couch first."

On Good Friday, Pastor Arboux came to me and I received the Holy Communion. He had brought the bread and the wine from his little chapel, and we knelt down together afterwards on the tiles of the cell.

On Easter Day I felt unusually depressed. It was such a great day at home. My mother and I hid eggs of all sizes and colours in the garden. Each of them contained surprises, and Marthe spent most of the day looking for them. When a child I gave her chicks and ducklings on that occasion. She very soon learned to know them, and she gave them names. One Easter Day she came into the drawing-room followed by all her *protégés*, and her favourite cock, L'Effronté (Bold-face), a bird I had given her the year before, flew on the grand piano and crowed!

I sang at the Temple of *l'Etoile* on Easter Day, and in the evening Marthe, one or two musical friends and I, gave a concert. The whole family was gathered, and all the little roughnesses of life were forgotten. My husband gave up painting and came down from his dear studio, and played with Marthe, whom he adored.

M. Arboux came to Saint-Lazare, early in the morning, and although it was on one of the busiest days of the year with him, he remained with me longer than he intended to, for he saw how miserable I felt.

After vespers—Juliette had attended that service and had then gone to the "parlour"—the Sister Superior entered my cell. I jumped off my bed, where I was sobbing, and apologised. Gently "Our Mother" scolded me, and said: "You will wear your eyes out; you must not cry. . . . I have brought you some visitors." . . .

Several Sisters came in one by one, and my cell was lit up by all those smiling faces and the white *cornettes*.

Sister Léonide gave me some primroses. "They will re-

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place," she said, "the faded mimosa on your little table. These primroses were sent us by a poor girl who has not forgotten the little we were able to do for her when she was a prisoner here. . . . 'Our Mother' has given me permission to offer you those few flowers."

There were nine or ten Sisters in my cell now; they all spoke kindly to me, and every one made me a little present. "Our Mother" handed me a small photograph of a Raphael Madonna; another, two new-laid eggs sent her by her parents, farmers near Paris. . . . One Sister, young, and with mischievous eyes, gave me a very faded branch of "snow-balls," and said: "Sister Léonide has told me that you can revive flowers that are almost dead. . . . When can I come to see the miracle?"

"In a day's time," I replied. Our Mother asked me what my "secret" was, and I told her that it merely consisted in nipping off the ends of the stems and dipping them for a while in warm water, but one had to instinctively guess how long they must be kept in the water, and how warm the water must be. Two or three "baths" might be necessary.

The next day, the "snow-balls" looked fresh and beautiful, and the Sister Superior spoke of "Resurrection."

I almost forgot, on that Sunday evening, that I was in prison, and when the Sisters left my cell, it seemed to me that a great part of my sorrow had been taken from me, and flew away on the great white wings of the Sisters' *cornettes*.

I was no longer alone in my cell. I had the primroses and the "snow-balls," and I laid them, as on a tomb, before my mother's portrait.

Towards the middle of May, Maître Aubin came one morning, excited as I had never seen him before.

He seized both my hands and exclaimed: "You are saved. The murderers have been found. At least, it is an almost sure thing. At any moment you may be set free. I have seldom been so happy!"

I had so often been disappointed that I dared not share my counsel's enthusiasm.

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"But, Madame, you must not be sceptical. . . . Listen!" And he told me that a man called Allaire, who had already been denounced as one of the Impasse Ronsin murderers in an anonymous letter received by M. Hamard, had been arrested at Versailles, where he had been caught stealing at a fair. Investigations had shown that Allaire had been concerned in a burglary with a friend of his, called Tardivel, and a red-haired woman called Batifolier. Allaire had denied his participation in the Steinheil murder, but had admitted that Tardivel had told him all about that murder, in which he, Tardivel, had played a leading part!

I was filled with hope, and yet I feared lest this new turn in events might lead to nothing, as so many others had, and merely mean a postponement of my release or my trial, a longer stay in prison. . . .

I was right, alas! The Tardivel investigations lasted nearly *two months*, and merely led to the discovery that Allaire was an epileptic, that Tardivel was a lunatic, and that although both were burglars, they had had nothing to do with the Impasse Ronsin drama. Tardivel, to impress Allaire, had *boasted* that he was the murderer of M. Steinheil and Mme. Japy!

The Tardivel Dossier fills 234 pages and contains 36,000 words. That my counsel had good cause to believe that at last the assassins had been tracked down, may be gathered from the following extracts from the Tardivel dossier:

"May 15th, 1909. We, Debauchey, Police-Commissary at Versailles . . . have interrogated Allaire, Emmanuel, aged 27 . . . about his alleged participation in the murders of M. Steinheil and Mme. Japy. . . .

Answer. "So far as I am concerned, I know nothing about the Steinheil affair, except the declarations made to me by my friend Angello Tardivel. . . . I knew Angello at the lunatic asylum at Rennes, where I was placed at the same time as he. I left the asylum a little before he did, wandered and worked in many places and came to Versailles at the end of 1907. On July 5th, 1908, at the 'Feast of the Work-Yards,' I met Tardivel, and we had a drink together. . . . He told me about himself, and said he was the author of many bur-

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glaries. He proposed that I should join him, and said I would not lose by it, for burglaries paid well. I met him again a few days later, and it was then that he said he was one of the authors of the murder in the Impasse Ronsin. The widow Batifolier was with me at the time, but that did not matter, for he knew that she was deaf. However, I repeated to the widow, later on, what Tardivel had told me. Tardivel said there had been four of them in the Steinheil affair: himself, a man called Pierre Robert, aged 28 or 29, another whose name he did not give, and a tall red-haired woman called Amélie Brunot, who was Robert's friend. . . . Tardivel had lived in the Rue de Vaugirard, close to the Impasse Ronsin, and he seemed to know the Steinheil house perfectly well both inside and out. I cannot tell you whether Tardivel was once a model. . . . He has long dark curls falling on his shoulders, and is rather handsome. He speaks several languages, including Italian, Spanish and English. He also told me that he had acted as super in various theatres. He did not say how he and his companions entered the Steinheil house, but I understand that he had some skeleton keys, a crowbar, a revolver, and an electric lantern. . . . I remember his saying that they found a woman in her bed. . . . The red-haired woman went first, and the others followed. . . . They put some wadding soaked with chloroform on the woman's face . . . and they bound her. He said that the rope they used came from the girth of a saddle. He did not say anything about M. Steinheil or the other lady, but merely that they had stolen money . . . candlesticks and other things. When he told me all this, Tardivel was a little drunk. What I have told you is absolutely the truth . . ."

Question. "Do you not believe that Tardivel, when he told you all this in confidence . . . was only boasting in order to impress you with his ability, so that you would be led to accept his proposals? Do you believe he was sincere, and had spoken the truth?"

Answer. "Yes, I believe he spoke the truth, and that he was really one of the murderers. . . ."

(*Dossier* Cote 4)

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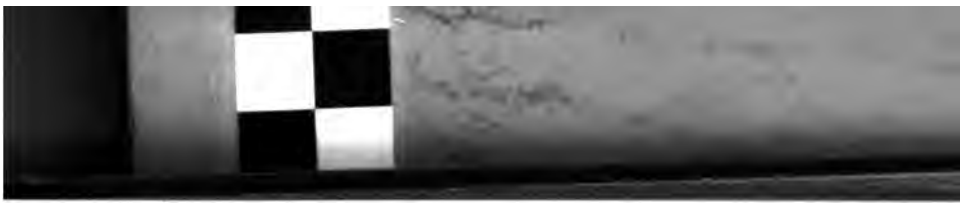

The reader may imagine my feelings when I heard all those details from my counsel!

Tardivel was traced. He proved that he "had had nothing to do with the Steinheil affair," and that he was "the victim of Allaire's spite."

(*Dossier* Cote 34)

Of course Marthe, too, believed in the Tardivel clue, and when she came to the prison she told me to be patient "just a little longer." But nothing happened. It was clearly demonstrated after weeks of investigations, during which I could hardly eat or sleep, that neither Allaire nor Tardivel could have had anything to do with the murder.

Meanwhile, journalists were once more besieging the house in the Impasse Ronsin, and my daughter, finding that they stopped at nothing to gain admittance, resorted to a very simple and effective method of getting rid of them. She turned the garden hose on the invaders.

Scores of persons—especially foreigners—came to the house, and when Marthe was absent the doorkeeper allowed herself to be bribed into showing the visitors round the apartments!

Days went by; weeks, months . . . endless, weary months, and the Tardivel clue yielded no results. It was a dreadful blow to me, but a worse was to fall. Ever since March 30th, 1909, the *Procureur* had had before him all the documents of the "Steinheil case." On June 18th five magistrates of the *Chambre des Mises en Accusation*, found a true bill against me, and on July 8, nearly eight months after my arrest, I was informed, at the request of the *Procureur*, that a release was out of the question, and that I would be tried in the Paris Court of Assize. . . .

The dreadful news was broken to me in the Director's room. M. Desmoulin was there with M. Pons. They both looked very uneasy, but made merely commonplace remarks. Then Maître Aubin rushed in with Maître Landowski.

"I am delighted, Madame!" he exclaimed. "I will vindicate you, I'll prove your innocence. Rejoice, Madame, rejoice!"

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Marthe's love, M. Arboux's and the Sisters' exhortations, I fell seriously ill, and for over three weeks there were serious fears for my life. After a time, Marthe was allowed to visit me again, and she besought me to be brave, to make a supreme effort. I had been eight months in prison, I should try to grow used to the thought of remaining at Saint-Lazare three or four months longer, since victory was at the end.

"But the victory," my daughter explained in deep, powerful tones that contrasted so strongly with her slim, small figure, "can only be won if you work on the dossier of your case. You will have to ask for that dossier, and study it most carefully for your own defence. M. Aubin says so, and he knows."

She compelled me to eat, to take the various remedies ordered by the doctor and, seeing her so brave, I did my best to recover, and to call up courage and hope in the ordeal before me.

Soon afterwards, I was told that M. de Valles would be the Chief Judge at my trial, and M. Trouard-Riolle the Advocate-General (Public Prosecutor).

I had never met M. de Valles, but I was informed that he was a viscount, a grandson of Charles d'Hozier, "the last genealogist of France," and a descendant of another famous genealogist, Pierre d'Hozier, who, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, founded, with Renaudot and Richelieu, the *Gazette*, France's first newspaper. I also heard that he was an able archæologist, a learned Latinist, whose greatest joy was to sit in his library in the company of Horace, Lucretius, or the immortal Virgil, that he was a worthy, able, and extremely fair judge.

About M. Trouard-Riolle I needed no information. I had met him in various drawing-rooms at intervals for some fifteen years. I had known his beautiful and fascinating wife quite well, and I knew all about M. Trouard-Riolle's career, from the days he had left the Lycée at Rouen and had become a Doctor of Law, to the time when he was made an Advocate-General.

A few days later I was called down-stairs to the Director's

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study. When I entered the little room I knew so well, I saw, near M. Pons, a tall, well-dressed man of about fifty with clean-cut features, clear eyes, grey hair and beard, and an expression of great firmness and refinement.

The Director of Saint-Lazare said: "President de Valles."

The latter said: "Sit down, Madame." Those three words were spoken in a cold yet polite tone, which was in sharp contrast to the coarseness of another judge whom I had not yet forgotten. A *greffier* read aloud a document . . . I thanked M. de Valles for having come to the prison, and then said: "The thought of being tried publicly for a double murder of which I am innocent is unendurable, but I still hope that light will be thrown on the mystery. But what difficulties there are, *Monsieur le Président*, for you as well as for me, in such a trial, for I understand that certain facts must be left in the dark!" . . .

M. de Valles did not answer my remark, but said: "Public opinion, Madame, is very much against you . . . and it is impossible not to recognise that your husband loved you."

"No, *Monsieur le Président*, my husband did not love me, he adored me, and since he did anything I wished, I obviously had no reason to kill him. As for my mother, her letters to me and my letters to her ought to have made it impossible for Judge André to maintain his accusation."

It was quite clear that M. de Valles did not care to discuss any point in my case. He asked me to sign the document which his *greffier* had read, and said: "I advise you to be calm, very calm, Madame. I can realise that the thought of the Court of Assize must be most painful to you, but, in order that you may get used, as it were, to the atmosphere of the Court, I intend, when your trial takes place, asking you first of all a number of questions of no great importance about your childhood and youth which you will find it easy to answer, however upset and distraught you may be."

I thanked him and said: "Is it true that my trial will be a kind of spectacle to which women will eagerly rush—and be admitted—to enjoy the sight of my grief and pain? If so, I

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must tell you, *Monsieur Le Président*, that I shall be unable to control my feelings." . . .

M. de Valles pretended not to have heard, and said: "Maître Aubin is an able counsel, with a great heart and a high conscience. Follow the advice he gives you, and since you say you are innocent, let your innocence give you the strength and power to convince the jury."

M. de Valles rose and rang a bell. A warder came, and I was escorted to my cell.

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CHAPTER XXVIII

THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY-THREE DAYS IN PRISON (*continued*)

A FEW days later, my counsel came and said to me: "We are to receive the dossier, all the documents of your case, and we shall then be able to read the evidence of all the witnesses, follow, page by page, the various clues in their reports, and learn all that has been done—and not been done. . . . Only, you will have to pay for that dossier."

"Pay!" I exclaimed. "Pay to know why I am accused of having murdered my husband and my mother! Pay to be able to defend myself! You must have lost your reason, Maître Aubin!"

"You are quite right, Madame: it is an infamous thing that money should be demanded for your own dossier. It is scandalous, wicked, unheard-of. . . . I grant you all that. But still, we must have the dossier, and pay for it, since payment is demanded."

I shook my head: "Suppose I were a poor woman, should I have to do without it?"

"Of course not. . . . But your dossier is enormous. It contains 4000 documents, and 15,000 pages. Think of it! At 150 words a page, it means two million and a quarter words. They want 1800 francs for it (£72)."

"Can you not plead without it?"

"I could, certainly; I have been present at the whole of your *Instruction*, and therefore know all about the case. . . . But one never can tell, the Prosecution might spring some surprise upon us, at the eleventh hour; we might not be prepared for it, however absurd or fantastic it might be. . . . It would

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be better if we could study the dossier in its entirety, and acquaint ourselves with the exact replies of all the witnesses to the questions M. Hamard, M. Leydet, and M. André put."

"Very well, then; I will defend myself, alone, without the dossier, and without you, and my innocence shall triumph."

The next day, Marthe came and entreated me to buy the dossier, saying that I had no right to take any risks. She even threatened to buy it herself for me, if I did not alter my decision. I had to yield, and entrusted my solicitor with the care of "purchasing the documents of my own case," adding that I wished him to "try and obtain a reduction."

My solicitor obtained the dossier after much haggling, for £48, instead of £72, and I knew then that another unlawful act had been committed . . . by the Law!

It was the middle of summer now. It was light soon after three in our cell, and Juliette pinned a blanket across our window so that we might sleep a little longer. I still did much sewing for the Sisters, but devoted several hours a day to the study of the voluminous and amazing dossier. Twice, and sometimes three times a week, my counsel came, and we "worked" together.

I discovered many remarkable things in the dossier. I discovered, for instance, that ninety-nine per cent. of the persons whom I knew intimately, receiving them again and again at my house, and seeing them or communicating with them as often as two or three times a week—and this until a few days before the crime—had declared in their evidence that they hardly knew me at all!

One gentleman, a bright and thoroughly useless nonentity, who had known me for several years, and whom for the sake of his charming young wife, I had greatly helped in his career, stated that he had only met me once or twice . . . forgetting that I had possessed, and still possess, a few scores of his letters in which he beseeched me to help him out of his difficulties, and to intercede in his favour with this or that Minister of State! An aged lady, who ruled over a political Salon—whose chief aim in life was nothing more nor less than the overthrow of the Republic, and who invited me, though I never

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eight. She used my salon as a means of making and cultivating acquaintances who might be useful to herself and her husband. People prominent in politics, art, or society did not attend her receptions, and she frequently sought my help in her desire to alter this. She brought all her friends to my house, called on me with her husband, not only in Paris but at Bellevue, where she came not just once, for a "mere visit of condolence," but a dozen or fifteen times without being invited, and week after week she sent me charming letters, all beginning with the words, "My darling Nell,"—a name she had given me for some reason unknown to me—not every day, but almost!

As for the close friends who coolly declared they had never met me at all, their names would make a long list! . . . I have forgiven them all. Friends in need are rare indeed; and was a woman ever in greater need—of sympathy—than I was during those terrible months that followed the crime! Well, I would rather that "devoted" friends ignored me than slandered me, as so many did, alas. . . .

As a matter of fact, the only people who did have a kind or just word to say about me were not Society people, or wealthy or "prominent" personages, but old servants whom I had nursed when they were ill, and poor artists—men and women —who were not ashamed to say that I had helped them.

The dossier, indeed, proved a mine of psychological information. It revealed in their true light the character of scores of people whom I had trusted, helped, and liked, and it showed up vividly a side of Parisian Society which it is perhaps best to ignore.

I experienced another surprise when I found that several persons whom I had never met, and had never heard of, gave evidence about me—most damaging evidence, of course.

The most "dramatic" discovery I made in the dossier was that of Comte de Balincourt's career. The following document, especially, gave me one of the greatest shocks I ever experienced:

"Paris, December 9th, 1909. *Report:*

"According to my instructions, I called on the 3rd inst. on

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M. Sébille, Principal Commissary of the *Sûreté Générale* at the Ministry of the Interior. This magistrate pointed out to our chief the interest there might be in consulting a dossier which M. Sébille possesses about Comte de Balincourt, whose name has been mentioned in connection with the Steinheil affair.

"M. Sébille first of all made it known that, at the beginning of December 1907, he had been concerned with de Balincourt. The latter had been marked out to him as the instigator of a burglary which was to take place at that time to the detriment of Mme. de Brossard, a lady of independent means, 23 Rue de l'Orangerie, at Versailles.

"This burglary was to be committed in circumstances which are related in the dossier which M. Sébille allowed me to consult.

"The facts are these:

"D. H. J. H. Emmanuel Testu, Count de Balincourt, born on August 4th, 1873, was married at Versailles in December 1901. . . . A divorce was pronounced against him in January 1907. It is said that while he was married, Count de Balincourt made long stays at his wife's grandmother's, Mme. de Brossard, at Versailles. He knew that she had large sums of money in her safe. Needy, and having recourse to expedients, de Balincourt planned the burglary mentioned above.

"He told his friend P. L. F. Delpit—who styled himself a man 'of independent means'—about the scheme. At that time, de Balincourt and Delpit resided together at Neuilly. It would appear that Delpit, who mixes with criminal people, took upon himself the task of recruiting the individuals capable of successfully carrying out that 'operation.'

"Whilst he was being carefully shadowed by M. Sébille's inspectors, Delpit was followed to the haunts of professional thieves . . . (two of these haunts are here quoted). It was thus ascertained that Delpit had conferred with criminal individuals, the identity of a few of whom was established:

"(1) A man nicknamed Baptistin, aged 30 . . . who has the reputation of being a dangerous criminal. . . . (2) Langon, Marius, nicknamed 'the Gypsy.' . . . He is men-

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tioned as possessing a special pneumatic tool for boring metal. . . . Five sentences have been passed on him, including one of five years' imprisonment. . . . (3) Goirand, aged 30 . . . twice condemned. . . . (4) Fontaine, Gustave, aged 30. . . . (5) *Monstet de Fonpeyrine, born in 1877, at Santiago de Cuba,* conjurer, arrested in November last for robberies in Paris hotels.

"Whilst these individuals were being shadowed by the *Sûreté Générale,* it was found that Fontaine drove to Versailles in a motor-car, and he was seen at night trying skeleton keys in the lock of the door of Mme. de Brossard's mansion.

"It is not known whether some indiscretions were committed; at any rate, these individuals ceased to meet in their haunts, and abandoned their plans.

"Finally, during the shadowing of Count de Balincourt, *one of the inspectors saw him go to the Impasse Ronsin No. 6, and from there, by the Underground to the station of 'Les Couronnes,' where he (de Balincourt) had an appointment with the above-mentioned individuals.* . . .

". . . At any rate, the fact seems sufficiently established that the initial steps of the burglary that had been planned were carried out, since skeleton keys were tried by Fontaine, on the door of Mme. Brossard (grandmother of de B.'s wife).

"As regards de Balincourt and Delpit, both these individuals are mentioned in the general report concerning the Steinheil affair. *There are 'dossiers' about both of them in the archives of the Sûreté in reference to burglaries; and further, there are photographs of both of them at the 'Service of Judicial Identification.'*

"(Signed) Inspector Dechet."

(*Dossier* Cote 1069)

And this Count de Balincourt I received, alas, several times at my house and once at Bellevue, in circumstances which I have described!

No power on earth could induce me even to suggest that M. de Balincourt and his friend knew anything about the Impasse Ronsin murder, or were in any way connected with it.

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I foolishly accused Couillard and Wolff, and have bitterly regretted it ever since, but I have often thought what a fortunate thing it was for me that I was not acquainted with those details of M. de Balincourt's life, after the crime and *before* my arrest. For, in the morbid state of agitation in which I was, and in my pardonable eagerness to discover the murderers, I should no doubt have made my own case worse by accusing, not only my valet and the son of my cook, but also M. de Balincourt, especially as he had gained access to my house in a rather strange manner, had deceived me about his address, had done his utmost to gain M. Steinheil's confidence, *and knew about the Faure documents.*

As it was, I had strong suspicions against him, and they became even stronger, and surely, after what I read in M. de Balincourt's dossier, and have partly quoted, the reader will perhaps grant that, although I had no "real" or "absolute" cause to suspect the man, I had some reason to . . . let us say, distrust him.

I must add, however, that in another of Inspector Dechet's reports I read that: "It has been impossible to ascertain what persons M. de Balincourt went about with in May 1908. . . . The only friend he was known to have at the time was Delpit, who lived with him. It is useful to mention that M. de Balincourt has always asserted that he had made the acquaintance of Mme. Steinheil towards February 15th (1908). . . . It appears doubtful therefore that at the time when this individual (M. de B.) was being shadowed by the *Sûreté Générale* in December 1907, he could have been seen going to No. 6 Impasse Ronsin.

"The Inspector:

"(Signed) DECHET."

(*Dossier* Cote 1089)

M. de Balincourt was several times interrogated, and among other things, he stated: "On Saturday, May 30, 1908, I returned at about 8 P.M. to the pavilion where I reside with my friend Delpit (at Courbevoie, a suburb of Paris). . . . We dined at 11.30; we parted and went each of us to his rooms.

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The next day, May 31st, I rose late and joined my father at the Neuilly Church, as I did every Sunday. At about one o'clock I was back home and lunched with my family and Delpit. I spent the afternoon in my garden, and only went out at seven o'clock to buy the journal *La Presse*, with Delpit, at the station. After we had deplored our losses, for we had put some money on a horse which had not won, my attention was drawn to a heading announcing the murder of the members of the Steinheil family. As I read the article I was dumfounded and absolutely distracted. We were surprised, Delpit and I, that Mme. Steinheil had been spared by the murderers, but I was the first to recognise that circumstances must have favoured her. . . .

"(Signed) HAMARD.
COMTE DE BALINCOURT."

(*Dossier* Cote 1087)

I must also add that it is stated in the *Dossier* Cote 1089, that it was not while the gang of thieves previously referred to were being shadowed that one of them "was seen going to Versailles to try the skeleton-keys" but that "the fact was revealed by an *indicateur* whose name the *Sûreté Générale* could not divulge."

I made many other strange discoveries in that most extraordinary of dossiers. Indeed, it not only contains the absolute proofs of my innocence, throws much light on Parisian life, and gives an insight into the psychology of at least two or three "spheres" of Society, but it also holds a serious condemnation of a number of judicial methods, so palpably unjust that it seems incredible that they should be allowed to exist in a land, which by universal consent ranks foremost, not only in the realms of Art and Science, but also in the domain of Intellectuality, noble aspirations, and idealism.

The dossier fills 15,000 pages; it is therefore impossible to quote it in full. . . . I have, however, submitted to the reader its most essential parts; but before concluding this rapid review of the surprises that dossier held in store for me, I should like to mention one or two more episodes:

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. . . No, no, we shall not mention this to any one. You can rely on us. But what a dreadful secret!" . . .

The next day, of course, all the newspapers devoted columns to it.

The mystery ceased to be a mystery: Mme. Steinheil had poisoned the victims and afterwards strangled them, when they were quite defenceless! It was quite clear! The riddle was solved, at last!

Once again, Public Opinion was aroused against me. And from these people who read the newspapers, whose minds were daily being incensed against me—to such an extent, I have heard since, that it was not safe for any one to take my part, even in a salon!—from that enraged Public, twelve men were to be chosen, a few months later, to decide my fate!

I need hardly say that there was not one atom of truth in that atrocious story. In her evidence given *before M. André*, on January 12th, 1909, my "friend" stated: "Three or four years ago, I received two or three anonymous letters, teasing rather than nasty. I *supposed* they came from Mme. Steinheil, but I never spoke to her about them. On the occasion of the New Year, at that same period, a box of chocolates, badly packed, was left with my *concierge* for me. Without tasting them or giving any to any one, not even my dog, I sent those chocolates to the Municipal Laboratory to be analysed. I was told that the chocolates were absolutely harmless. I had taken the whole thing as a joke, which I attributed to the author of the anonymous letters, that is, to Mme. Steinheil. Since then I have found that those chocolates had been sent me by Doctor C."

(*Dossier* Cote 3058)

A thorough inquiry was made, and its results form a report dated February 9th, 1909, addressed to M. Hamard by Inspector Laurent, in which it is stated that:

". . . She (Mme. D.) lost or destroyed the written reply sent by the Laboratory, but remembers that it said the chocolates were harmless. . . . Dr. C. stated that two or three years ago he had sent to Mme. D. a box of chocolates, but

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that he had forgotten to send his card with it, so that the lady heard of the origin of the chocolates only when he himself asked her if she had received them. The lady *never* told him they were 'bad.'

"Inquiries made by the Municipal Laboratory about those chocolates, yielded no results. *No traces can be found that Mme. D. ever sent chocolates to be analysed, either in her own name or in any other name at her address.*"

(*Dossier* Cote 3060)

In this way was yet another "story," most damaging to my cause, told, spread, universally discussed—and finally proved to be entirely false! Once more I was vindicated, but once more . . . incalculable harm had been done me.

This fantastic story of the "poisoned chocolates" had a sequel, whether direct or indirect, I cannot tell. At any rate, shortly afterwards, the body of M. Steinheil was exhumed. In December 1908, that of my mother had been exhumed, and now, my husband's remains were once more examined, so that a search might be made for any traces of narcotic or poison.

Dr. Courtois-Suffit, had made a thorough "medical" examination, immediately after the crime, but ten months later, Dr. Balthazard was requested by M. André to make a second autopsy!

Although M. Steinheil was buried in the family vault at L'Hay, Marthe's consent was not even asked for the exhumation. The tomb was, as it were, broken into, and the body of her father removed to be examined once more. (Yet another unlawful act committed by the law!) She—and I—only heard of the exhumation several days after it had taken place. I can hardly believe that such an arbitrary and scandalous act could have been committed in any other civilised country.

The conclusion of Dr. Balthazard's lengthy and most painstaking report was that "toxicological examination of the viscera . . . *did not reveal any traces* of narcotic or 'stupefactive.'"

(*Dossier* Cote 220)

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There was no mention whatever of poison. In this same and final report, Dr. Balthazard went on to say that: "Finally, M. Steinheil died without a struggle, from strangulation by a cord; it appears that he died at the spot where he was found . . . (away from his bed, on the threshold of the bath-room). Secondly, Mme. Japy died of suffocation owing to the introduction of a voluminous gag of wadding into her mouth; before she was dead, a cord was tightened round her neck; Mme. Japy appears to have died on her bed at the very place where her body was found. There were no traces of violence to indicate that she struggled against an aggressor." . . .

In Cote 197, I read with interest the statements made by M. Rousseau, a mechanic at the large printing works in the Impasse Ronsin—which employ some two thousand men and women.

"About three weeks before the crime, I noticed in the Impasse Ronsin, at noon, or 1 P.M., three men and a woman near the wall of the Steinheils' house; they were talking together . . . The woman rang at the gate. Some one came and spoke to her for a few moments. Meanwhile, the three men walked a little away from the gate, but remained on that side of the Impasse." After describing the four persons (the three men wore "black felt artists' hats," and the "woman wore a shawl in the Italian style"), M. Rousseau declared that he "saw those people again several times, near the gate of my house," and that he was struck by "their hesitating attitude."

A "M. Godefroy, also employed at the printing works . . . remembered having seen those individuals in the Impasse Ronsin . . ."

I was also surprised to find that in this colossal dossier many persons gave evidence who had only met me once or twice, whilst close friends whom I had known for years were not questioned about me. Thus the dossier contained no mention of Bonnat or Massenet, of M. Viollet-le-Duc, of M. Delalande—French Consul-General in Naples and recently in London—who had known me from the days when I was only

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fourteen; of M. Sadi-Carnot, son of the late President; of M. Duteil d'Ozanne, Chief of the Secretariat of the "Legion of Honour"; and many other prominent men. Not one of the generals, admirals, statesmen, politicians, and important officials who knew me well, were consulted, nor, of course, President Tassard, President Petit, or any of the numberless magistrates with whom, and with whose wives, I was on terms of close friendship.

Whilst working on the dossier I became less despondent, and regained some of the strength I had lost. Reading those documents aroused not only my indignation, but also my will. I would not be condemned; I would fight the Prosecution and win; I would say all I knew, happen what might. . . . But my counsel begged me to let him conduct my defence, and warned me, now that my trial was approaching, as he had warned me before the *Instruction*. "If you attack any one, you are lost," he would say; "be calm, answer questions, and let *me* do everything at your trial."

When would that trial take place? When should I be free? I kept asking those two questions of Maître Aubin who, alas! could give me no definite answer.

The summer had passed; the autumn had come. Through the iron bars of my window I saw the leaves fall one by one from the trees in the yard, and the prison and the sky were again grey and dreary, as on that November day, a year before, when I awoke to find myself for the first time in a prison cell. I knew every one in the prison now, and every stone. I knew every cat and many of the pigeons, which I had named.

Marthe came three times a week. The Sisters were more attentive and devoted than ever. Pastor Arboux and the Catholic Chaplain visited me as regularly as ever, and Juliette did her utmost to make my life more bearable; but the end of a journey is always the most trying part to body and mind, and then I was not sure, in spite of my absolute innocence, that the end of my terrible journey was at hand. I had been treated with such injustice, and, as I knew only too well,

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Photo. by Claude Harris, London

OBJECTS I USED IN PRISON

Slippers made by myself.

Penny looking-glass—only kind allowed by the prison authorities.

Blunt knife. Salt Cellar. Jug. Basin.

Coffee Strainer—made by myself with fire-wood sticks, some linen and wire taken from my hat.

Breadbasket—made by myself with paper.

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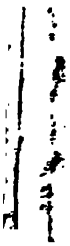

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opinion was so much against me, that at times I imagined that I should be found guilty. But I argued with Sister Léonide, or Juliette, or . . . myself, and Hope sprang eternal in my frozen heart.

I had now been over eleven months in prison. November had come, with its dull skies and monotonous rains. My cell was dark again, and damper than ever. Juliette "read" the cards five, eight, ten times a day for me, and told me every time that my innocence would appear to all, and that I should be triumphantly acquitted. . . . It is wonderful what cards can say, or be made to say.

I knew the dossier by heart now in spite of its two million words. But the opening day of the trial, although every second brought me nearer to it, seemed to become more hopelessly distant. I sat on my rush chair by the open window and tried to take an interest in what I saw, although I knew it all so well. The drizzling rain drifted in through the wire trellis and the iron bars, and cooled my burning forehead. I pressed my hands flat against the trellis to cool them too, and sometimes, in a gust of frenzy at the thought of my imprisonment, I convulsively clutched both the bars and the trellis, and shook and shook them as if I thought I could shake them to pieces.

I heard that my trial was to begin at the Assize Court on Wednesday, November 3rd (1909), at noon.

Towards the end of October I had had a long talk with my daughter, and we had agreed that it would be better for me—and her—if she did not come again to Saint-Lazare. Her visits gave me life, but at the same time we could not help talking about the impending and momentous trial. Marthe wept bitterly, and the sight of her tears made me lose the courage and strength I so much needed to enable me to face the terrible ordeal.

"I will come at the end of your trial to see you acquitted, mother!" had been the last words of my beloved daughter.

I had long talks with my counsel. He urged me to be calm and discreet. Above all, he entreated me not to mention any "new" fact, and not to speak of President Faure or the judges

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I had known intimately; in short, he repeated what he had said to me before the *Instruction*.

I promised everything. I had the greatest confidence in my counsel, and he had sworn to me that I should be acquitted if only I did as he told me. I threatened, however, to break all my promises if there were women at my trial. I was thinking chiefly of *one* woman, the wife of a most prominent personage—at the time—the very woman who had visited President Faure shortly before my arrival at the Elysée on that fatal February 16th, 1899. I could not bear the idea that *she* might be in the court, smiling sarcastically at my misfortune and my shame—she free, powerful, perhaps even respected, and I a prisoner accused of murder! . . . Let not the reader think that there was or could be a question of jealousy between that woman and me. She hated me in those days when President Faure honoured me not only with his friendship but with his confidence, and she had hated me ever since. For my own part, I had not worried over her, but I had warned the President time after time against her, for it was she who had urged him to adopt that dangerous remedy from the abuse of which I have no doubt he died. . . . I thought of other women, too: "friends," who after seeing me for fifteen years in my salon now find it "amusing" to watch me in a Court of Assize. . . . Ah! Let not the reader speak of Spite, Jealousy, or Malice! I had but one thought: to be acquitted, to escape from that Inferno, and to be once more near my child. But I needed all my reason and all my strength for that trial, and I felt that if around me I saw women laugh at my misery, my grief would be greater, the trial more painful, victory more difficult to achieve! . . .

Did Maître Aubin take some steps or not? I cannot say, nor do I wish to know. But I was shown, shortly before the opening of the trial, a cutting from *Le Temps*, I believe, which stated that M. de Valles would not allow any ladies to be present at the Steinheil trial.

On Sunday, October 31, my counsel remained with me most of the day, giving me his final words of advice and warning.

Personally, I did not know any longer what to do, or say,

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or think. I was exhausted, bewildered, worn, a prey to a thousand and one conflicting thoughts and emotions. For eighteen months my life had been a martyrdom; no sorrow, no pain, no insult, no trial had been spared me, and now I longed for peace, for sleep, for oblivion. Nothing else mattered.

On Monday, November 1, I was told that I should be sent for the next day at 2 P.M. and taken to the Palace of Justice. Several of the Sisters remained a long time in my cell. Pastor Arboux called and prayed with me. The old chaplain, M. Doumergue, played the organ in the chapel, then he came to my cell and gave me his blessing. . . . I could not sleep during the night, and poor Juliette, with her usual kindness, remained, hour after hour, seated near my bed, talking to me, cheering me, comforting me. . . .

The next morning—Tuesday, November 2—Sister Léonide brought me my hat, cloak and gloves; and the Sisters came once more to say that they had prayed for me and to ask me to trust in the Almighty: I would be acquitted, they all knew it; my innocence would be victoriously revealed. They could hardly speak, and I was so moved that words failed me when I tried to thank them all. . . .

A clock struck two, I had been ready since noon. No one came. Three o'clock, four, five, six, eight, ten o'clock! Still no one. . . . Then Sister Léonide entered my cell and said: "You will not go to-day; they will come and fetch you to-morrow at five in the morning, my poor child!"

I had been walking up and down my cell for over ten hours! Sister Léonide compelled me to eat a little. I went to bed, assisted by Juliette, and I fell asleep and dreamed of Marthe.

Sister Léonide awoke me at 4 A.M., for, at five, I would be sent for. . . . And my trial was to begin at noon! I felt very tired and sleepy. Juliette kissed me good-bye. Sister Léonide asked me to remember Saint-Lazare—and her—sometimes, and she too gave me a blessing. Then, after a look round the cell where I had been imprisoned for nearly a year, and a last hand-shake with Juliette, I walked out into the "Boulevard of the Cells" and followed Sister Léonide. That the prisoners might not know of my departure, the gong was

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not rung. I walked as in a trance. But all the time, I thought of my arrival at Saint-Lazare a year before! A year! . . . I had spent a year within the walls of a prison! . . .

It was cold, very cold, and the silence was awe-inspiring. I thanked Sister Léonide for all that she had done for me, but there must have been more gratitude in my eyes than in my words. . . . Then, I was led to a carriage and driven to the *Dépôt* before I fully realised that I had left Saint-Lazare—probably for ever!

On the way, I looked at Paris, that vast city which for me had lost its meaning. . . . I counted the lamp-posts we passed, watched the few people I saw, threw a glance at the Seine, the waters of which seemed to be made of molten lead, cold and motionless. A fine drizzle struck my face through my mourning veil as I stepped out of the carriage and entered the *Dépôt*. . . .

There, the Sister Superior with the beautiful and pathetic face was awaiting me. She begged me to lie down on the bed in the cell, and I gladly obeyed, but at 8.30 A.M., I felt so restless that I rose and paced my cage. The aged Sister of Mercy came, and I heard that hundreds of poor wretches had spent the night outside the Palace of Justice in order to sell their "seats" to persons anxious to be present at my trial. I was told afterwards that such "seats" fetched from twenty-five to one hundred francs (£1 to £4), and that a few morbid amateurs of sensational spectacles paid as much as £10 and even £15 for the privilege of standing at the back of the court in the small and overcrowded "public" enclosure, to watch a woman struggling to prove her innocence.

I was asked to be "quite ready" by 11 A.M. I was ready in every way, except mentally, for as the hour drew near when I would appear before my judges, I felt my strength ebb from me. It all seemed so useless, so utterly absurd, to be innocent and yet to have to prove one's innocence, to fight for one's life! . . .

Some one—the Director at the *Dépôt* perhaps—told me I should need all the presence of mind, all the will and all the

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power of arguing at my command, and I heard to my unspeakable disgust that recently—yes, before my trial—the *Matin* had published *in extenso* the text of the *Indictment* against me!

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CHAPTER XXIX

THE TRIAL

I WAS at last taken to the guards' room, close to the Court of Assize. Whilst I sat in a corner I heard a municipal guard say to another: "Look at her dress! The papers are wrong!"

Later, I discovered the meaning of this remark. It appears that some well-intentioned newspaper had informed its readers that I had had a wonderful mourning-dress made by Worth or Paquin especially for the trial! As a matter of fact, I wore the very dress and the same toque in which I had arrived at Saint-Lazare a year before!

I also heard that, apart from judges, jurymen, witnesses, officials of the court, barristers, representatives of the press, and a very limited attendance of the public at the back of the Court (the law stipulates that trials must be public), no one would be allowed to be present.

A number of persons came to give me all kinds of contradictory advice. "Don't be haughty," said one, "for that would displease the jury"; "Don't look depressed or ashamed, for that would suggest guilt," said another; one barrister recommended me not to look "unnatural," and some one else urged me not to look "natural, for an innocent woman accused of murder could not possibly look herself at her trial!" M. Desmoulin said: "I'll be present at the trial and remain to the end, not far from you. Your agony is nearing its end. Be brave, and, above all, do as your counsel tells you, and change or add nothing to your previous statements." Dr. Socquet—whom I had never seen before, but who was most devoted and useful to me all through that harrowing trial—gave me a

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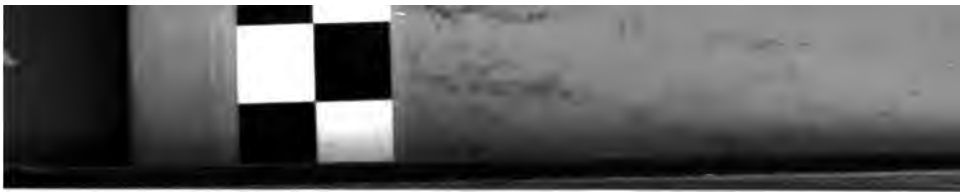

soothing potion to drink. Meanwhile the guards smoked their pipes and their cigarettes, and watched me—a few in a suspicious and disagreeable manner, but most of them with kindness and sympathy.

I could hear a great buzz of excitement coming from the Court: the noise of hundreds of feet and hundreds of voices, exclamations, bursts of laughter even—exactly like the buzz one hears at a theatre, on a first night, before the curtain goes up. My heart beat within me like a heavy hammer. My head throbbed with pain and fever as if it would burst, and my hands and feet were icy cold.

A voice suddenly said, close to me: "Come, Madame."

I rose automatically and, between two municipal guardsmen, walked along a short passage. A door was opened before me. I stepped into the Court of Assize and entered the dock. There were guards near me and behind me. Absolute silence reigned. Everything was dark . . . so dark. I shuddered. Then I heard voices just before and a little below me: my three counsel were there standing by their bench, talking to me, encouraging me. I threw my veil back over my hat and shoulders and tried to listen to Maître Aubin and his secretaries. Gradually I grew used to the surroundings. When I raised my head—it seemed ages, but was probably a few seconds only after I had entered the dock—I saw, first of all, a group of men wrapped in shadow—the jury—in a dock similar to mine, just opposite me under large windows through which filtered the dismal light of a rainy November day. I felt the light on my face. Near the jury, at a kind of desk, was seated a man in a red robe, whom I knew well: M. Trouard-Riolle, the Advocate-General, with a hawklike face, a bald scalp, a receding forehead, a thin long nose, ferrety eyes behind a pince-nez, a double chin, and a fat neck, knitted brows and sneering lips under a narrow close-cropped moustache. . . . Between the jury and me was the well of the Court, a wide space, empty save for a semi-circular bar, held on three uprights—the witness-bar—and a table on which I saw the "exhibits": gags of wadding, an alpenstock, the brandy bottle, coils of cord too. . . .

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On the right, at a few yards from me, on a platform, sits M. de Valles, with a judge on either side of him. All three wear red robes. M. de Valles toys with an ivory paper knife. Before him is placed the huge dossier of my case, that extraordinary dossier which I know by heart. In the shadow, behind the three judges' arm-chairs are a number of persons, "guests of honour," I presume. On the left of the dock are scores of barristers in their black gowns and white rabats, including one or two women-barristers. Behind them, tightly pressed together, a small army of journalists, and at the other end of the Court, behind a wooden partition, the public: "*les cent veinards*" (the "hundred lucky ones"), as I was told later on, those privileged few were called who had bought the right to stand there, from the poor wretches who spent night and day outside the Palace of Justice to sell their place to the highest bidder, shortly before noon (at which time the doors were thrown open and just one hundred "members of the public" admitted).

I have no clear recollection of what took place at first. I only remember a mass of faces floating, as it were, on a dark ocean of black gowns and clothes. The only touches of colour were the white scarves of the barristers and the scarlet gowns of the judges.

I seemed to have no strength left, and yet never had I so much needed physical and moral strength.

A clerk read aloud, in a monotonous voice, the terrible indictment. I knew it by heart . . . and so perhaps did everybody else, since it had been published. . . .

Meanwhile I watched the jury. So these were the men who would, in a few days, decide whether I had or not murdered my husband and my mother. . . . I wondered what they thought and who was who—for a list of their names and occupations had been shown me the day before. It included four "proprietors," two mechanics, one bricklayer, one baker, two commercial clerks, one cook and one musician. . . .

I looked at the heavy decorated ceiling with the sunk panels adorned with the sword and scales of Justice; and my eyes wandered to the wall behind M. de Valles and the two other judges. . . .

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Years ago, I had visited this Court of Assize to admire my friend Bonnat's great "Christ" on that wall, but the Christ was no longer there. It had been removed after the Law separating Church and State had been passed!

Suddenly, I heard M. de Valles' voice ordering me to rise. . . .

The duel began.

I made a supreme effort to stop my distracted mind from whirling round and round. I had been twelve months in prison; I had been for seventeen months a prey to every conceivable emotion, and had gone through such harrowing and nerve-racking experiences that every doctor who had seen me failed to understand how it was that I had not lost my reason; and now, after over five hundred days of continuous mental and physical martyrdom, I had to fight the greatest battle of my existence.

M. de Valles kept his promise: he asked me at first a number of almost indifferent questions about my childhood and my youth, and I had time to collect myself to some extent. . . . But soon, very soon, the remarks I heard were so revolting that I reeled under them. I had to deny, for instance, that my father—whom, by now, the reader must have learned to know and to love—was a drunkard, and to declare that my conduct was irreproachable and could not have caused his death as was hinted. . . . Relentlessly, mercilessly, questions were asked me about my relations with Lieut. Sheffer, at Beaucourt! I fought desperately, and then, worn out by my own efforts, I almost collapsed, and could not help sobbing. . . .

An allusion was made to President Faure. I remembered my counsel's entreaties, and when the Judge suggested that I should not conceal anything, and that I should have no fear in mentioning names, however exalted, I merely replied: "No, Monsieur le President, the man we are thinking of is dead, and I will let the dead rest in peace."

M. de Valles spoke about my reticences, and my many contradictory statements, and from a report of the trial I find that I replied: "For hours at the time there were journalists near me, who declared that I was lost unless I gave up 'my old sys-

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tem of defence' and 'made fresh statements.' Everybody made different suggestions to me; I ceased to be a woman and became almost a maniac. But would any woman in my circumstances have done otherwise? I swear upon the head of my own daughter, that my first statement about the three men in black gowns, and the red-haired woman, is the truth."

"Come back to the point," said the judge. "You talk about too many things at the same time. Be methodical in your replies."

"Methodical! . . . How can I speak as you would have me speak? At first I thought I was accused of having lied, but for months I have known I was accused of having murdered both my husband, whom I respected, and my mother, whom I loved. And before such an accusation, you quietly ask me to be methodical. I say things as they come to my mind. I speak with my very heart, and there can be no question of my method!" . . .

Then I was interrogated about my "intrigues." The final questions of the Judge at that first hearing referred to the last days of May 1908, and it was clear that he wished to form his own opinion about the suggestion that I had enticed my mother to stay at my house—in order to kill her as well as my husband. . . .

My examination by the Judge took up the first three days of my trial. Each hearing started at about noon, and ended between 5.30 and 6 P.M. I may here state the essential points of the French procedure in such cases.

After the reading of the Indictment by the Clerk of the Court, the President interrogates the prisoner. After that, he examines the various witnesses, who are then cross-examined by the Advocate-General, or Public Prosecutor, and by the Counsel for the Defence, both however, being only allowed to ask questions of the witnesses through the President. After the witnesses have been examined and cross-examined (this cross-examination being, as a rule, very brief), the Advocate-General makes his speech, in which he asks generally for the maximum punishment. Then the Counsel for the Defence

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speaks, at length, and afterwards the Judge asks the prisoner if he, or she, has any statement to make. He then tells the jury the question to which they are requested to reply, and without any summing up by the Judge (or *résumé*, as it used to be called in France, when it was part of the proceedings, until suppressed because it was found to be seldom impartial!) the jury retire and deliberate. When the foreman returns, followed by the eleven jurors, he stands up and renders the verdict "before God and before men," and the Judge, after rapidly consulting with his two colleagues, orders the prisoner to be brought in, and pronounces sentence.

At the second hearing—on Thursday, November 4th, 1909—M. de Valles dealt with the night of May 30th–31st, 1908. I repeated publicly the statements I had made to M. Bouchotte, the Police-commissary, and to Judge Leydet, a few hours after the crime; and to Judge André, eight months later. M. de Valles, however, instead of raising objections, instead of dismissing my "story" of the crime as a fable, and describing the men in dark gowns as "black ghosts," was satisfied with questioning me about certain reticences and contradictions of mine, and firmly, yet fairly, endeavoured to throw as much light as possible on the baffling mystery.

Still, the occasion was so intensely dramatic, there was such a terrible keenness in the jurors' eyes, such bitter scorn on M. Trouard-Riolle's lips, such strong emotions swayed the whole court, and such an ominous hush fell over the vast hall where so many people had been tried for their lives and sentenced to death, year after year, that cold perspiration streamed from my forehead as I spoke, as I shouted the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as I cried out that I was innocent. . . . I lived through the fatal night once more, and all the time I saw my darling Marthe before me, standing in the centre of the well, waiting for me, confidently waiting to see her mother rehabilitated, acquitted, free. . . . The effort was superhuman and poignant . . . and when I had finished speaking, explaining, struggling, I sank on to my bench, and the two guards at my side rose and whispered: "The sitting is adjourned; come outside, and rest, Madame." I could

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hardly tear my hands from the wooden partition of the dock on which they were fiercely clutched. . . .

Doctor Socquet came to my assistance in the guards' room, where I had been taken, and half an hour later a bell rang. I returned to the Court, and the duel began once more. It had lasted only a short while, when suddenly a letter was brought in to my counsel, who, after perusing it, handed it to the President.

M. de Valles read the letter aloud: "To Maître Aubin: As I can no longer bear the weight of my crime, I have come to declare to you that I was an accomplice in the murder of M. Steinheil. It was I who played the part of the red-haired woman. I have the wig with me.—Jean Lefèvre."

A young man with long dark hair, and a sallow complexion, and wearing a shabby grey suit, was brought in and guided to the witnesses' bar. In a dazed, hesitating manner, he declared that his name was Lefèvre, that he was twenty-one. . . . I eagerly looked at him, but he did not remind me of any one I had seen on the night of the crime.

In answer to questions put to him by the President, he replied:

"I wrote that letter because I was an accomplice of the assassin. I was dressed as a woman, and wore this red wig. We burnt the gowns in the forest of Montmorency. . . . My friend is dead. . . . I dressed as a woman in a dark street. My friend had a key. . . . I was like a madman, and followed my friend, who said there was money. . . . We went upstairs with electric pocket-lamps. I remained near the door of Mme. Steinheil's room. My friend asked her where the money and the jewels were. . . . He disappeared and came back. . . . Then we rushed down-stairs. Outside he told me that he had found 8000 francs (£310). My friend went away without giving me anything. . . ."

It was clear that the young man was either a lunatic or a strange impostor.

My examination was continued. There was a long argument about the ink-stains found on the carpet and on my knee, and about the way in which I was bound. . . .

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Tortured by the necessity of having to reply—satisfactorily—to searching questions which to me, innocent as I was, seemed useless and incomprehensible, rendered quite ill by the long and gruesome discussion about the fatal night, I once more sank back, exhausted, on my bench, and burst into a violent fit of weeping. . . . And that was only the end of the second hearing of my trial which my counsel told me was to last at least ten days!

Directly he had taken his seat the next day (Friday, November 5th), the President turned to the jury, and said: "I owe you an explanation, gentlemen, about the stupid incident which made us waste so much valuable time yesterday. The young man whom you saw is not called Lefèvre; his real name is René Collard. He made up his mind to see Mme. Steinheil. I thought I had taken all possible precautions to guard the doors, but I had forgotten this extraordinary means of invasion. It has been found that Collard wrote to M. Hamard, to M. André. . . . This young man longed to see Mme. Steinheil. The incident is now closed."

After this, my ordeal began again.

The President questioned me about the "grandfather"-clock, in the hall, which stopped at 12.12 on the night of the crime. After mentioning that I said I had heard my mother cry: "Meg, Meg . . ." just after the last stroke of the hour, he expressed his surprise that the murderers could have killed two persons, gagged and bound a third, and ransacked drawers—in twelve minutes.

I could have replied that possibly my husband had been murdered before I heard my mother cry, that the murderers, as they left the house, might have put the clock back, that they acted, no doubt, as quickly as possible, especially if, as I have always been convinced, they came to steal, not to kill. . . . But I had only one thought: I, Marguerite Steinheil-Japy, am accused of murder!

And I kept repeating: "It is horrible! I have killed neither my husband nor my mother." The President grew impatient, and I remembered crying out: "Ah! you don't want me to protest. You don't want me to shout my innocence. But

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what would be *your* attitude if *you* were accused of having murdered your wife and your father? I protest, not against you, Monsieur de Valles, but against the Law."

I apologised the next day to the President for this outburst, and I may here state that since I have read the full report of that terrible trial, of which, alas, I was the heroine, I have been struck even more than at the trial itself—when I was too ill and too distraught to see things in quite their proper light—by the absolute impartiality of M. de Valles. He paid a tribute to my disinterestedness, to my activity and qualities as a housewife, and when, later on, Couillard gave evidence, he declared that he would not ask my valet to give his opinion about me, adding: "I do not see the necessity of repeating the mere gossip and twaddle of the servants' hall."

Only once did M. de Valles really deviate from his usual fair and irreproachable attitude: he was questioning me about placing the pearl in Couillard's pocket-book, and finding my answers were not satisfactory, finding that I hesitated and sobbed, he exclaimed: "I thought so!" Then turning to the jury, he added: "Gentlemen, watch this clever woman. She collapses whenever I ask a question that she cannot answer—watch her faint! The fainting scene is coming!" As a matter of fact, I faltered and sobbed many, many times, but not once did I faint.

There were many fierce encounters between the President and me during that third hearing, especially about the famous pearl, and I can do no better than quote from a report of the trial:

"MADAME S. I had my suspicions against Couillard. He had stolen a letter which my daughter had sent to her fiancé, I was told dreadful things about him. Also, I had almost lost my mind. I had no peace. I thought Couillard knew something, and in order to make him speak, I placed the pearl in his pocket-book."

"The Judge interrupts the prisoner, but she clamours entreatingly: 'Gentlemen of the jury, hear me, hear me!'

"She is sobbing as she speaks, and holds her head between her hands as if she feared that it would burst with the pain

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that she is enduring. 'If Couillard is not guilty and can say nothing, I thought, I will confess to having placed the pearl in the pocket-book and he will be released. Besides, when the letter was found on him, he exclaimed: "I am caught. I shall not speak except before the judge." Was not this suspicious, and was it not natural that in my anxiety to discover the murderers, I should jump hastily to conclusions? I am speaking the truth; I fear nothing.'

"THE PRESIDENT. 'You had no right to act as you did.'

"MADAME S. 'Does not the law use similar methods? I know something about it.'

"THE PRESIDENT. 'I forbid you to insult the Law. You are here in Court.' . . . (General uproar; M. Trouard-Riolle, M. de Valles and Maître Aubin all speak at the same time.)

"MADAME S. 'I know, I tell you I know. Examining magistrates torture their prisoners, whether there exist proofs of their guilt or not, and are ready to do anything to tear a confession from their victims.'

"THE PRESIDENT. 'You are speaking foolishly, Madame. For the honour of the Law, I protest.'

"MADAME S. 'I have spoken the truth. I ought to know something about examining magistrates. . . .'"

Then the Advocate-General attacked me, and said that I was lying. My counsel jumped up and shouted excitedly: "Sir, I forbid you to insult my client!" There was another uproar, and when it had subsided, I explained at length why I had accused Couillard and Wolff. . . .

A few moments afterwards, the hearing came to an end, and I found myself in my little cell at the *Dépôt*, surrounded by the kind Sisters of *Marie Joseph* and their *cornettes* and wimples, and their long pale-blue veils.

M. Desmoulin came to see me, and also Pastor Arboux, who, alas! through some inconceivable injustice, was not allowed to be present in Court! One of the Sisters gave me a special potion to soothe my nerves and to help me to sleep. But at about 2 A.M. batches of street women were brought in, and their cries, their insults to the Sisters, awoke me as I lay restless, sleepless, on my straw-bed, for the rest of the night,

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thinking of Marthe and wondering when the end of this terrible nightmare would come. I wrote to my counsel, giving him further explanations, beseeching him to say this or that. . . . And then I went to the chapel of the Sisters. Not far from this pretty little chapel were the cells in which Bailly, Danton, Camille Desmoulins, Madame Roland, and other great figures of the Revolution had awaited execution.

With the fifth hearing—on Saturday, November 7th—began the examination of the various witnesses. The first on the list was Rémy Couillard, my former valet. He walked quickly to the witness bar, a spare figure, with slit-like eyes, a long nose, hollow cheeks, hair cut very short, large awkward hands, and wearing the uniform of a dragoon—for he was serving his term in the army now.

Couillard took the oath amid an impressive silence—for, as I had been told, he was generally considered as the "pivot of the accusation." He began to tell quickly, the story of how he heard me, on May 30th, 1908, at 5.45 A.M., cry "Rémy, Rémy!" and how he found me bound on the bed in my daughter's room. To every one's amazement, my former valet made statements entirely different from those he made on the morning after the night of the crime. He said, for instance, that he had first undone the cords binding my feet to the bed-posts, and then those with which my wrists were secured; that a blanket and a sheet covered me entirely; that my hands were placed "over one another and resting on the stomach," and that there was no rope round my body. . . .

Maître Aubin, of course, reminded Couillard that he had stated, on May 31st, 1908, that my clothes had slipped up round my neck, that my hands were tied behind and above my head to the bed-posts, that a rope was passed over my body and under the bed, and that after he had first of all undone the cords fastening the wrists, he had with M. Lecoq's assistance undone those round my feet.

Intense excitement prevailed in Court, as Couillard swore he had just spoken the truth, and as my counsel read to him the document written on the morning after the crime under Couillard's dictation, as it were, and *signed* by him.

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These complete contradictions in my former valet's statements were naturally most favourable to me.

Indeed, it is not the least strange fact about that extraordinary trial, which was crowded with incidents, that the evidence given by most of the "witnesses for the Prosecution" was so obviously malicious and partial or clashed to such an extent with evidence previously given by these witnesses that it greatly told in my favour and proved my innocence, whilst, on the other hand, a number of so-called "witnesses for the defence" in their anxiety to serve me, went too far, and by their exaggerations, rather harmed than helped my cause!

As for Rémy Couillard, he had been five days in Prison because I had accused him and had placed a pearl in his pocket-book. I owed him a public apology, and I made it in all sincerity. "I know how I wronged you. You hate me, but I have suffered terribly. I repeat I regret what I did to you. Forgive me." My former valet turned to me and replied: "It's all right, Madame, I have nothing against you." . . .

After the written evidence of M. Lecoq had been read—for this engineer who had first heard Couillard's calls for help, was then travelling in America—there walked to the witnesses' bar, M. Albert Bonnot, a painter of nearly sixty, who in 1880 had married one of M. Steinheil's sisters. His studio was only separated from our garden by a small wall.

M. Bonnot explained that at one time his wife and he had been on affectionate terms with me, until some ten years before, when they severed their relations, but he remained the friend and collaborator of his brother-in-law. He then went on to state that "M. Steinheil, a few months before the crime, was profoundly depressed," and added that "when her husband was ill, Mme. Steinheil never looked after him but went away, anywhere, for three or four months at a time."

This was more than I could stand and, jumping up, under the sting of this false accusation obviously uttered to ruin me in the eyes of the jury, I exclaimed vehemently: "When my husband was ill, *Monsieur*, I nursed him with a devotion to

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which doctors and others will no doubt pay a tribute in this court, when the time comes."

M. Bonnot continued: "I saw my poor brother-in-law kneeling and his head hanging back. He was cold and stiff. . . . His clothes were neatly folded on a chair. Everything was in perfect order. There was no blood and no traces of steps. . . . I also saw the body of Mme. Japy. Then I left the place."

THE PRESIDENT. "You saw those two corpses and left without going to Mme. Steinheil?"

M. BONNOT. "I disliked her."

M. Bonnot forgot to say to the Judge that on that very day (May 31st, 1908), he had angrily exclaimed, in the veranda before a number of witnesses—who all repeated it to me: "There's no mistake about it; that wretched woman upstairs did the deed!" M. Buisson, M. Boeswilwald and several other persons who heard this shameful remark were so disgusted, that, losing their temper, they threatened to throw M. Bonnot bodily out of the house.

The next witness was M. Adolphe Geoffroy, a sculptor, who had also married a sister of M. Steinheil. He too made a bitter attack on me.

That painful hearing, during which I had been insulted by members of my late husband's own family, ended with the depositions of M. Bertillon, the world-famous anthropometrical expert, who declared that it had been impossible to identify several of the finger-prints on the brandy-bottle, and of Dr. Lefèvre who denied having ever said, "It is all a sham," concerning the way in which I was bound, but that he thought I had been securely bound.

After the hearing had been adjourned, barristers, doctors, officers, and guards eagerly pressed around me and congratulated me. "It is going splendidly; you'll win; there's nothing against you; the Prosecution will never recover from the blows it has received." . . . They all seemed to speak about some wrestling bout or boxing match. . . . I could not understand. To me it seemed so obvious that the Prosecution could not help realising the truth: my complete innocence. . . . And at the

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same time I thought of M. André, who, months ago, had heard the same evidence, and yet had not hesitated one second to conclude that I was guilty of having murdered my husband and my mother! And the awful thought entered my head that possibly the jury would share in his blindness, and that, in spite of my evident innocence, I would be condemned to death . . . or to lifelong imprisonment! . . .

I shuddered, hastily thanked all these unknown friends, all these sympathisers around me, and hastened to my cell, where the Sister Superior joined me and comforted me.

The Director of the *Dépôt* also stayed a short time in my dreary cell and spoke very kindly to me, and later I listened to the Sisters singing in the chapel of the *Conciergerie*, just as I had listened for a whole year, night after night, to the Sisters at Saint-Lazare.

The next morning, as every morning, came Pastor Arboux. Afterwards I saw the Sister Superior, but most of that endless Sunday I was left alone and walked about in one of the yards . . . in order to warm myself, the cell being bitterly cold.

The next day, Monday, November 8th, after M. Arboux's visit, I went to the chapel as usual, until I was told that "my" two guards were waiting for me.

When the Judge and his colleagues entered after the usher had shouted "*La Cour, Messieurs*" (The Court, Gentlemen!), everybody rose and then sat down again, but I remained standing—and I did so all through the trial—in order to hear M. de Valles tell me: "Sit down, *Madame*." That one word "Madame," instead of the word "Accused," usual in such cases, was a source of great joy to me. It almost reconciled me with the world and with my terrible position.

"Madame," only a little word, but it seemed to show that in the eyes of my Judge I was not yet found guilty, that the dreadful accusation had not yet been proved, and that to him at least I was still a woman—and a lady. . . . And day after day I waited for those welcome, refreshing words, "*Asseyez vous, Madame.*"

A number of witnesses came and gave evidence, including my doctor, M. Acheray, who contradicted himself once or

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twice, and thus roused the anger of the Advocate-General, who exclaimed: "You are constantly contradicting yourself. It is really amazing, and (here, a wild gesture) . . . you can go!"

A great uproar ensued; there were exclamations of protest, and M. Trouard-Riolle, turning to the public, cried with a sneer: "I do as I please, and laugh at your comments!" which remark only increased the uproar. . . .

I wondered how it would all end. What did it all mean? Everybody was talking at the same time; I could hear and see men speak excitedly and even laugh. Why those personal discussions between the prosecution and witnesses? . . . And all the time I was enduring an unspeakable agony, which increased with each hearing. Did everybody then, except myself, forget that I was accused of a ghastly murder? . . .

I wept. . . . And then doctors and experts succeeded one another at the witnesses' bar. . . . It was horrible to listen to those gruesome details. . . . Dr. Courtois-Suffit declared that he believed my mother had been killed before my husband, and that there was more than one murderer. Dr. Augier stated that he utterly failed to find any trace of poison or narcotic in the bodies of the victims, and Dr. Balthazard made a lengthy lecture about the autopsy, the spots found on the carpet, the cotton wool gags and what not. . . . It was all technical, so far-fetched, so useless, that I tried not to listen, and for once my eyes wandered to the left of the Court, where barristers, journalists and the public were densely packed.

I saw M. Renouard, M. Scott, M. Sem and other artists making sketches, and various photographers furtively taking snapshots. There was M. Claretie, Director of the *Théâtre Français;* M. Bernstein, the well-known playwright; M. Paul Adam, the gifted author. . . . I saw several of the Inspectors who, for months, had followed clues and done their best to assist me. . . . I saw the white-haired Rochefort, the famous journalist whose inexhaustible fund of combativeness was allowed, decade after decade, to attack anybody and everybody. In the days of Napoleon III. he was attacking M. de Morny and the Imperial Government in the *Figaro;* later, he attacked the Republic. He had been a frenzied Boulangist

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and a frenzied Anti-Dreyfusard; now he was a frenzied Anti-Steinheilist, if I may invent this word. *Day after day, during my trial,* he published an article against me. Later, I saw some of these articles, and found they were written in the most abusive, rankling and savage style. There was hardly an insult that was not hurled at me in those exasperated—and exasperating—onslaughts, and the irrepressible "Rochefort," the Marquis of Rochefort-Luçay, after exhausting his usual vocabulary of scorn, defamation and scurrility, found a wonderful name for me, an elegant, refined, picturesque name, which he repeated in all his articles; he called me "the Black Panther"! . . .

After the hearing—and between the brief adjournments which the Judge granted when I was too exhausted or too ill—batches of letters were handed me. . . . Among them were love-letters, including daily messages from an important personage in the Court, and an "ardent admirer." . . . The bitter irony of it all! . . .

I was so excited and demoralised that the next day, finding that I was being once more tortured with questions, to which I had already answered again and again, I exclaimed: "Do not exasperate me any more. . . . So far, I have shown complete discretion, but if I am driven to it, I shall cease to be discrete!" My counsel jumped up from his bench in front of me and beseeched me to be calm, I even think he threatened to leave the court if I talked that way again. . . . Poor Maître Aubin! How glad he must have been when the trial was over! . . .

At that sixth hearing, a number of minor witnesses were heard; M. Souloy, the jeweller, from whose evidence the fact stood out that of the twelve jewels belonging to me and the eleven belonging to my mother, eighteen were never found; M. Boin who admitted that in some cases, at least, I possessed double sets of identical jewels; M. and Mme. Chabrier, and others. . . . But the chief depositions were those of M. Hutin and M. de Labruyère of "Night of the Confession" fame!

M. de Labruyère spoke in a doleful way, but M. Hutin made an attempt at cheap humour. He said, for instance: "Ma-

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dame Steinheil was in a terrible state of depression—so was I," and "One may be a journalist and still be a man, especially in the presence of a woman."

After he had politely bowed in my direction, M. de Labruyère gave evidence and made a narrative of the "Night of the Confession" which was transferred, as it were, from M. Hutin's speech, and of course he denied that he or his colleague had in the least bullied me.

I may state here that the whole "audience"—excepting, naturally, the magistrates—gave vent to unmistakable expressions of indignation at the conduct of certain "enterprising" journalists in my case.

The next day, my cook, Mariette Wolff, was called to the witnesses' bar. It is said that one cannot easily describe the persons one knows best, and I will therefore quote the word-sketch of Mariette made by a writer present at the trial, and the résumé of her evidence.

"Mariette looks an old peasant woman from one of Balzac's novels. She is small and round. Her few grey hairs are brushed back from her wrinkled forehead. Her nose is strong, and her eyes are terrible—but when she wants to, she can soften their expression. There is hardly any interval between the nose and the stubborn little chin, which reminds one of a dried-up crabapple. She gives one an extraordinary impression of strength, shrewdness, and obstinacy. One can clearly see that she will not say more than she wants, and that no power on earth can make her speak against her will. She wears an old black dress, a piece of fur, and a modest black bonnet. Quite firmly, she takes up her position at the witnesses' bar, and raising her big yellow hands, she takes the oath in a gruff voice, without a shade of hesitation or nervousness.

"Mme. Steinheil, on whose features the long hours of the trial are telling, follows the movement of her former cook with great intentness. . . .

"In answer to the President's questions, Mariette declares that she was born in 1854, and has been a widow for over fifteen years. She first knew the Steinheils sixteen years ago.

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"THE PRESIDENT. 'Was Mme. Steinheil on good terms with your children?'

" 'Yes; she knew them all.'

"M. de Valles begins to ask Mariette a number of insidious questions, but the old woman is wonderfully sharp. She has a knack of not committing herself which causes amusement and admiration.

"It is quite obvious from the outset that she will do her utmost to shield her former mistress.

" 'Mme. Steinheil was a good housewife, wasn't she?' asks the President gently.

" 'Yes, M. le President.'

" 'And she helped you with the work?'

" 'She did.'

" 'Even with the heavy work?'

" 'Yes.'

" 'And she was strong, wasn't she? She could raise pieces of furniture, couldn't she?'

"But the old woman had seen the trap. She realises—as well as we all do—in spite of her apparent simplicity, that the Judge, if she replies to this question in the affirmative, will deduce that a person who can displace heavy furniture would have strength enough to strangle some one and drag a dead body about. Mariette quietly replied: 'My mistress did what she could, like anybody else.'

"M. de Valles nibbles his paper-cutter, raises his eyebrows, and sighs.

"His interrogatory now deals with the *Vert-Logis*, the Steinheils' villa at Bellevue, near Paris. 'Mme. Steinheil had many lovers,' he says. Maître Aubin rectifies: 'Many visitors you mean.'

"THE PRESIDENT. 'Mme. Wolff, I want you to tell the jury whether you remember having heard Mme. Steinheil exclaim shortly after the murder: "At last, I am free!" You have admitted it during the inquiry.'

" 'She was ill at the time and she certainly did not mean that she rejoiced at being a widow. Women say a lot of things

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when they are ill. She probably meant that she was glad her nurse had left the room, for she cared little for her.'

"Mariette never commits herself. She reminds one forcibly of the Norman peasant who being asked for his opinion on the apple crop replied: 'You can't say there are apples, because there are no apples, but you can't say there are no apples, because there are apples.'

"The President continues his interrogations: 'Did Mme. Steinheil love her husband? You ought to know, for no one knows more about people than their servants.'

" 'Servants see everything but should say nothing.'

" 'It has been established that Mme. Steinheil once sent her husband to his studio . . .'

" 'Well, what does that prove? Even the most devoted of wives lose their temper at times . . .'

" 'Did Mme. Steinheil love her mother?'

" 'When Mme. Japy came, she was welcomed . . .'

" 'Then how do you explain that Mme. Steinheil once said: "Mother again"?'

" 'Even the best of daughters can say a thing like that.'

" 'Mme. Steinheil sent you some time after the crime to Vert-Logis to fetch a little box which we believed contained her jewels. What was there in that box?'

" 'I don't know. Servants are not supposed to know what such parcels contain.'

" 'You are a model servant,' says the President ironically.

" 'I am not a model, thank you.'

" 'Did you take your mistress' dressing-gown to the dyers after the crime?'

" 'I don't remember. It is possible' . . .

" 'Did you know anything about the tapestries which disappeared from the studio on the night of the crime?'

" 'I have never seen them.'

" 'Then you are in contradiction with Mme. Steinheil?'

" 'I have nothing to do with the studio; I very seldom venture in . . . I am a cook and my place is in the kitchen.'

"The President then asks very quickly, in order to catch

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her, a number of questions about the facts which immediately preceded and followed the eventful night, but it is a case of amnesia . . . Mariette remembers nothing. 'After all those horrors,' she says, 'our minds have become blanks.'

"The President now deals with what happened on the other fatal night, the 'Night of the Confession.'

" 'What happened on November 25th, in the evening?'

" 'Three journalists who were continually pestering us, Messrs. de Labruyère, Hutin and Barby, arrived at seven-thirty. Madame only came at nine.' . . .

" 'Did you listen at the door? Witnesses have asserted it.'

" 'It is false. Let them come and say it to me.' Mariette is quite angry.

" 'When your mistress went to bed, you had a long talk with her?'

" 'Is not that natural? The poor woman, she looked like a corpse; she asked me for strychnine. She wanted to die and I kept on repeating: "It's all right . . . be calm." And then, when I saw M. Barby listening behind, I told him: "You have no business here. Clear out."'

"Mariette uses the strongest expression in the French language to order a rapid exit. She speaks so vehemently, and, it must be added, convincingly, that every one in the Court is impressed. Once more there is a general murmur of disapproval at the conduct of certain journalists."

M. de Balincourt made a brief appearance. He stammered a few words, and went away.

M. Bdl. was the next witness, and disclosed that he had never entertained the idea of marrying. He concluded his evidence with the words: "I am convinced of Mme. Steinheil's absolute innocence." He was followed at the witnesses' bar by one of his friends, M. Martin, who, after stating that there had never been any question of marriage between M. Bdl. and me, turned towards me and said: "Madame, you have been shockingly abandoned by all, but you have my full esteem."

Thursday, November 11. The trial enters upon its final

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stage. A few witnesses come and give evidence, all of them favourable to me. . . . One of them, Inspector Pouce, bravely exclaims: "If Mme. Steinheil had told me she was guilty, I would not have believed her." . . .

Then there enters a man with military bearing, whom I can hardly recognise, but whose voice, when he takes the oath, sends a thrill through my broken frame. I recognise him now. . . . It is Sheffer, the friend of my youth, my *fiancé* for a few months, my first love . . . over twenty years ago! . . . Tears come into my eyes, and I hide my head between my hands. . . .

Beaucourt! . . . My beloved father. . . . The avenue of chestnut. trees . . . our meetings . . . our charming, innocent idyll . . .

M. Sheffer, softly, sadly, tells the story of our beautiful, our sweet romance . . . I was eighteen then, and the happiest girl on earth, with a devoted mother and the best of all fathers. . . . And the young lieutenant loved me, and I loved him . . . Life was beautiful, and the future smiled on me . . .

And there stands my fiancé . . . I have not seen him for over twenty years. He stands there at the bar. I can feel his eyes resting on me in a kindly way, from time to time, as he recalls the past . . . "She was a charming young girl, refined, modest, artistically inclined . . . She worshipped her father and her mother . . . Marguerite is incapable of having committed the monstrous crime imputed to her . . ." My God! My God! And I am that Marguerite Japy, and I sit in a prisoner's dock, and I am being tried for murder . . . Is there no justice in this world! How much longer shall I be wrongly accused? How much longer am I to suffer? Has my martyrdom not lasted enough, then . . .

M. Sheffer ceases speaking . . . I hear him turn round to leave the Court. I raise my head, and our eyes meet . . . There is tender pity in his eyes; there are tears in mine . . . Oh! when will it all end?

The worst is coming. The Advocate-General rises, and throws back his red sleeves. The most tragic hour has come. . . . What horrible accusations will he make? What punishment will he ask for the crime I have never committed! . . .

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CHAPTER XXX

THE SPEECH FOR THE PROSECUTION— THE SPEECH FOR THE DEFENCE

Dusk has fallen. An attendant clicks the switches on, one after the other, with a sharp, dry sound of rattling bones, and the Court is flooded with light. That little noise and the sudden light jar my nerves and hurt me . . . I am no longer a normal human being. I do not know, at times, who I am or where I am, or what is going on around me . . . Still, I know this tall man opposite, and I can read in his bloodshot eyes that he means to do me all the harm he can. I hold tight to the wooden partition before me; if I let go, I feel I shall fall . . . And I must not, I will not, fall, at this supreme hour. I think of Marthe . . .

In a deep, harsh voice, M. Trouard-Riolle begins:

"Gentlemen of the jury, you have sat throughout eight hearings with the utmost patience. You have heard eighty witnesses. You have heard the experts. The voluminous dossier has been gone through by the President exhaustively . . . The work and the strain have been truly terrible. . . ."

Now he reviews my life story . . . Every fact, every incident, from the days when I was a little girl of five, is turned and twisted into something damaging to my cause. Murmurs of disapproval punctuate this monstrous speech by the Public Prosecutor, but he goes on, implacably; and as he flings out his accusations as if they were personal attacks, as if he loathed me and wished the whole world to know it, his eyes blaze more and more fiercely . . .

There exist *no proofs whatever* of my guilt, but, like M. André, M. Trouard-Riolle is convinced that I am guilty, and

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this is enough. He is there to prosecute, to accuse, to call for the heaviest sentence, and he does so relentlessly, scornfully, wildly. And he seems to enjoy his "great" task.

He has not spoken for five minutes before he brands me—he is dealing with my childhood—as a consummate coquette, and a liar!

According to him, the parents of M. Sheffer must have had good reasons to object to the union of their son with the dangerous Marguerite! . . . According to him, I married M. Steinheil because he had distinguished connections and resided in Paris, and because I was anxious to shine in society. . . . "To shine, indeed, has ever been her great ambition, and she did not stop at anything to achieve her ends!" . . . Now he deals with my love-affairs. I am not only a *comédienne* and a dangerous *liar*, I am not only an immoral, but a *mercenary* woman! M. Trouard-Riolle quite forgets that M. de Valles paid a glowing tribute, a day or two ago, to my "absolute disinterestedness," and thunders forth that I am a low, shrewd, calculating business-woman! . . .

While M. Trouard-Riolle goes on criticising my home-life, I wonder how *he* dare judge *me!* . . . I want to speak, to cry out what I feel, but my three counsel entreat me once more to be calm, and Maître Aubin, with that shrewd *bonhomie* so typical of him, whispers to me: "Let him blindly accuse you . . . he is merely making my task easier!"

M. Trouard-Riolle explains that there are two women in "that creature!": the woman with the musical, enchanting, caressing voice, who conquers and deceives, and the woman who threatens, attacks, and stops at nothing.

"The motive of the crime was the anxiety of Mme. Steinheil to make a rich marriage, because she hated her husband and was in financial distress," and then comes this dramatic and unexpected declaration: "Mme. Steinheil has murdered her husband with or without the assistance of an accomplice. *But that the accusation of matricide is not sufficiently established.* . . .

Friday, November 12. M. Trouard-Riolle continues his speech for the Prosecution. I have reached the extreme limit

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of physical and mental endurance. I breathe with the greatest difficulty, and can hardly open my eyes. During the night, I have suffered from a terrible nervous attack, and time after time, doctors have come to my assistance. I clutch the partition in front of me, but cannot feel it. My senses are numb, all except my hearing, alas . . .

M. Trouard-Riolle, speaks, speaks, speaks—his speech lasts altogether for nearly seven hours.

. . . There was no struggle, no violence; the whole affair was a sham . . . he explains. The lock of the door was not tampered with, and a false key could not have been used since the real key was found in the lock on the inside. . . . Therefore, Mme. Steinheil herself opened the door to admit her accomplice! . . . Pay no attention to M. Bdl's. attitude, gentlemen of the jury . . . you cannot expect a man who has been a lover of a woman to give evidence against her. . . . To clear herself, she accuses people right and left, anybody and everybody. . . . Why did she resuscitate a case which was almost forgotten? On account of M. Bdl's. attitude. Her husband objected to divorce. She was in financial difficulties. M. Bdl. was rich. . . . She killed her husband. . . . When she accused others of the crime she committed, she was in a nervous state, and it was the paroxysms of frenzy due to the pitiless and maddening questions of some journalists which, she says, caused her to make false accusations. . . . And yet in this Court, gentlemen of the jury, you have seen her self-controlled, fearless, impudent, answering all questions readily, unhesitatingly. . . . Remember that this woman lies as she breathes. . . .

". . . The men in black gowns, the red-haired woman? A fable! . . . A political side to the mystery? Nonsense! . . . Burglary? There was none! . . . Why did those who killed M. Steinheil and Mme. Japy not murder Mme. Steinheil as well? She claims that it is because they took her for her daughter. . . . But I say that murderers can be as well recognised by a girl of sixteen as by a woman of thirty-nine. . . . In either case they would have had no pity. . . . The fact that she was spared proves that she took part in the crime. . . .

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"She was bound so loosely that she could easily have freed herself, rushed to the window, and shouted for help. . . . But she had to play a part, and she did so. . . . She was ill when they found her the next morning? Of course she was! Any woman would be upset after having murdered her husband and witnessed the death of her mother. . . .

". . . What extraordinary burglars, gentlemen of the jury. They had revolvers, but committed the crime with cords and wadding! . . .

"How did the crime take place? It is quite clear:

"Mme. Steinheil hates her husband and wants to get rid of him because, on the one hand, there is a husband whom she despises, and, on the other, a wealthy lover whose wife she aspires to become. She tells herself that if she is found one night bound, near the body of her husband, everybody will believe her guilty. Then, with her perfidious temperament, she summons her mother to Paris to the house in the Impasse Ronsin, not to kill her, but to have her there as a witness of the simulated attack. She devises that both her mother and herself are to be bound.

"Mme. Steinheil goes down and opens the door to a man or woman, but probably a woman.

"We had not sufficient proof to effect an arrest. . . . Then Mme. Steinheil and that woman, or Mme. Steinheil and that man, go upstairs after having taken the cord in the kitchen. It was not intended to murder Mme. Japy, but an unforeseen event occurs while she is being fastened and the wadding forced into her mouth. . . . M. Steinheil is awakened by her cries, and the two women, or the woman and the man, rush at him. One holds his body, the other strangles him. The painter falls dead. . . .

"Meanwhile, Mme. Japy's false teeth have become unfastened, and she died by suffocation; but, to make sure of her death, they strangled her. At first I did not believe that Mme. Steinheil was guilty. But now my conviction is established. If I had had the slightest doubt I would have told you so, but, on the contrary, I say that the work betrays its author, and the author is there."

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I looked up at M. Trouard-Riolle and see him pointing to me. An extraordinary incident then occurs: the Advocate-General, turning to the jury, adds: "She was the author of the crime; and finding some one, rather a woman than a man, in her more or less immediate *entourage*, she summoned that woman, or she summoned that man, relying on his or her silence. If it had been possible for the law to seize the one or the other, we should have had them arrested. But we do not think we had enough proofs to know and to say: 'It is this, or that one. . . . Gentlemen, you must accept the responsibility of a sentence as I accept that of accusing, I hand you the sword of justice, trusting that you will return a verdict both wise and firm."

I am bewildered. . . . There is a general uproar. The whole court rises. . . . I can see Mariette gesticulating frantically, at one end of the room. It is clear that the Advocate-General meant Mariette and Alexandre, her son. . . . But both have been called as witnesses, both have been fully exonerated by M. Leydet and afterwards by M. André. Is all this a ghastly farce, then!

Maître Aubin rises as if shot up by a spring, and thunders: "You are too honest, *Monsieur l'Avocat-Général*, not to reply to the question I am now going to ask you: I wish to know whether in the suggestions you have just made, you were hinting at Mariette Wolff or her son?"

The court rings with applause; barristers and journalists climb on the benches and tables. I look at M. Trouard-Riolle. . . . He does not reply to my counsel, but makes a wide, evasive gesture, and turns to the President, who adjourns the sitting. . . .

Hands seize my arms, and helped by the guards, I leave the Court.

Saturday, November 13th, 1909, Noon. The final hearing, the end of my trial; at least, I hope so, as I stumble into the dock assisted by the guards who softly whisper words of encouragement. The atmosphere is stifling. I can hardly see, but I can feel that the Court contains far more people than usual. I sink on to my bench. The President notices that

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the foreman of the jury, M. Poupard, is not there, and inquires as to the cause of his absence. One of the jurors says he has heard that the foreman is ill. The sitting is adjourned.

1 P.M. I am led back to my bench. M. de Valles reads a telegram from the absent foreman: "I am ill. Have me replaced. Poupard." Doctor Socquet is sent to see whether the foreman will soon be well enough to come, and once more the sitting is adjourned.

2.30 P.M. The bell again. For the third time I enter the dock. The judges appear. Doctor Socquet says that the foreman was taken ill on the previous night and is suffering from bronchitis, he is unable to serve on the jury. A new juror who has been present at all hearings is sworn.

And now dead silence pervades the Court. Mariette walks to the witnesses' bar: "I have heard," she says, in a loud blunt manner, "that my son and I have been called murderers. . . . I demand an apology."

The President answers that she has not been formally designated by the Advocate-General, declares the incident closed, and tells Mariette to withdraw.

Maître Aubin rises and begins his speech for the defence.

"Gentlemen of the Court, gentlemen of the jury, after long hesitation, after scruples and doubts which yesterday he admitted to you, the Advocate-General has hardened in his conviction of Mme. Steinheil's guilt."

This is all I hear. There is not one atom of strength left in me. I fall forward with my head on my hands, which rest on the wooden partition . . . and I wait. Three times my counsel's speech is interrupted by adjournments; three times I am dragged away from my seat to the guards' room; three times I am dragged back to it, wondering when the unspeakable agony will end . . .

As I write, I have before me, the *Plaidoirie* of Maître Antony Aubin, extracted from the "Review of Great Contemporary Trials," and I will quote from it a few pages, those dealing with facts which have not yet been fully explained to the reader, and also certain passages containing remarks,

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which, for reasons that will no doubt appear obvious, I could not have made myself. . . .

". . . I am only seeking the truth. Mme. Steinheil does not altogether deserve praise; but still less does she deserve the severe way in which you have been treating her. No pedestal, no pillory! . . . The Advocate-General exhausted himself during the past five months in the study of the dossier, but he has passed by Mme. Steinheil. He has not studied her. . . . To speak plainly he knows nothing about her.

"Mme. Steinheil was kind, obliging, attentive, devoted to all . . . and what is most important of all: to her husband himself.

"Let us prove it.

"To show that she was goodness itself to her family—to Mme. Seyrig, to her brother Julien, and to Mme. Herr—nothing is easier. As regards Mme. Seyrig, one example will be sufficient—the following letter which Mme. Seyrig sent to her sister from Bizerte on September 23rd, 1903.

" 'My dear Meg,—I hope that you are better. . . . My husband has been foolish enough to place money in real estate. . . . I am sorry to trouble you when you are ill, but I think that you will not hesitate, you who saved Julien, to save us. I don't know how I shall go on. I feel I shall be ill if Henri has not those 20,000 francs.' . . .

"The money was sent to Mme. Seyrig. . . .

"Here is a recent letter from Mme. Japy to her daughter:

" 'My Darling little Meg,—How you must need a less tiring life, my dear child, and how I should love to see you have the strength to give up other people, and to think a little more of yourself and of the care which your health absolutely demands. Try to learn, my adored one, to think of yourself, and to forget wanting always to please others. . . .'

"What does the Prosecution think of this? This woman, always so devoted—nay, too devoted—who knew her? Ignor-

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ing the reality, welcoming the most terribly untruthful rumours, never hesitating before inexcusable calumnies, and carried away by the frenzy of writing . . . journalists have printed the statement that 'Mme. Steinheil detested, abominated her mother.' . . . I have read and re-read this atrocious libel! And I, who knew the horror of it, have remained silent; yes, during that long *Instruction* I have allowed the mud to flow, I said nothing. I didn't protest, not even by a gesture, because, not to speak of the professional rule which imposed silence on me, I knew that a solemn hour would come when at last I should have the right to speak to you—the joy to speak to you and to convince you. And it is for such a woman that the penalty of death is tacitly, implicitly, evasively demanded. The penalty of death! What supreme irony! Perhaps you think that the Prosecution wanted to put it on one side by talking to you of the prisoner rather as an accomplice than as the chief author of the crime. Don't be misled: an affirmative verdict on either of these questions means death. Death? But, Monsieur l'Avocat-General, if you had proposed it to the jury, every one in this Court would have revolted. . . .

"To return to this unfortunate and tortured woman. Opinion, which has been misled, has raised a barrier between Mme. Steinheil and the poor and humble. Well, let this barrier be broken down. The prisoner was only too anxious to assist them. Who says so? Marie Boucard, who was her maid for ten years, declared at the *Instruction* on December 12th, 1908: 'Mme. Steinheil was devoted to the poor.' A former valet, Duclerc, stated: 'She was extremely kind to her servants and all those around her, rendered services to all, and nursed the poor of the district! . . . In Cote 3040 it is said that: 'Of her old dresses she made with her own hands clothes which were sent afterwards to a charity organisation in Beaucourt.'

". . . In the painter's studio the able Mme. Steinheil is ever active. Are costumes needed for her husband's models? As an expert needlewoman she cuts and sews, and under her deft fingers the various materials soon become doublets and hose in the Henry IV. or Louis XIII. style. She works without res-

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pite. Sometimes she replaces a model, and for long hours she sits for her husband. Sometimes when a painting has to be completed she handles the brushes, for she is an able artist. . . . She is the useful collaborator who is ever assisting and completing her husband—that timid, easily depressed, and weak-willed husband. . . .

"But what you wish to know is not only whether the husband was helped as an artist—although that has some importance—but also, and above all, whether as a man and a husband he was abandoned, left aside, and despised. You have heard on this point Mme. Steinheil's two brothers-in-law, M. Geoffroy, and Monsieur Bonnot. . . . You have at once felt that those witnesses, bitter and hostile, spoke with animosity, and violently took part against their sister-in-law. It was they who stated that she took no care whatever of her husband and left him for three or four months at a time: 'To go on one knows where,' taking no interest whatever in his life or his health. Every word an inaccuracy! It was Mme. Steinheil who bought everything for the house, and even her husband's clothes. That three or four months' journey? It was only an absence of a few weeks in 1907, when Mme. Steinheil went to England with her daughter and the Buisson family. 'To go no one knows where!' Could any words be more misleading? When people don't know, they should remain silent. Messieurs Geoffroy et Bonnot! The way of living and the health of her husband were indifferent to her? True, Steinheil lived as he pleased, but it cannot possibly be said that until his last hour he wasn't cared for by his wife. Doctor Acheray has strongly denied the statements of the brother-in-law, and M. Courtois-Suffit himself told you that at the end of 1907 he was summoned by Mme. Steinheil to examine M. Steinheil. . . . As for Mme. Buisson, a witness who surely cannot be called partial, she stated that: 'Mme. Steinheil was extremely kind and attentive to her husband, and cared about his health, seeing to it that he followed the diet prescribed for him.'

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sessed her, overwhelmed her—and carried away by her temperament, she was moved to tears, to anguish. . . . The guests have lost her salon. They have hardly turned the corner of the street, and she has hardly dried her tears before the poor nervous woman buries her head in her hands and thinks. Of what? Of her power? Of the magnetism of her voice? Her success must make her believe that people are easily conquered by her! Alas! However great her fascination, it is really she, after all, who is dominated by mysterious and invisible forces. How easily it is when one sees how quickly she is self-hypnotised, to realise how easily others may hypnotise her. . . . Is it possible then that this woman, who has been represented as so strong, was after all but a toy of men and events!

". . . The Indictment said to Mme. Steinheil: 'You wanted to get rid of your husband in order to marry M. Bdl.' And M. Bdl. replied: 'There was no thought in me of marrying again, and these are the reasons why: I had a daughter of twelve, and I wish to bring her up before thinking of marriage —and even then it isn't certain that I should have thought of it. Besides, I had absolutely decided not to give a step-mother to my daughter, aged eighteen, who might marry soon. . . .'

". . . I wished M. Bdl. to let you hear the whole truth, and M. Bdl., asked by me in this Court whether he had given Mme. Steinheil reasons to hope that he would marry her, told you that she could not possibly have conceived any. I pressed the question, and he was firm in his reply: 'Mme. Steinheil on this matter of marriage did not and could not have had any illusion.'

". . . Let us then put aside the so-called motive of the crime.

". . . The accusation of matricide has been abandoned; the prosecution rightly feared your common sense; but, for a whole year public opinion believed her guilty because the newspapers printed these atrocious words, borrowed from the *Instruction*: 'She hated her mother.' And now that the unfortunate Mme. Steinheil, represented as an unnatural daughter, has been despised and loathed; now that, under the cover of this monstrous accusation of matricide, has grown up that other

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accusation, that of the murder of her husband, your conviction and your sense of justice, Monsieur l'Avocat Général, make a curtsey to her and depart. It is all very well for you, but it isn't enough for her. No, it is not enough for this poor woman, yesterday accused of two murders, to be accused today of one only—and I may say that later on, when people think over this trial, they will pity her profoundly, and feel indignant at the accumulation of errors against her. . . .

. . . "Ceasing to regard Mme. Japy as a 'victim,' the Advocate-General has imagined her as a 'witness.' . . . I have my own version, quite a new one, concerning the death of Mme. Japy, the Advocate-General gravely declares. I have studied, I have searched, and doubted; then, finally, I have reached an explanation, a version. . . .

. . . "And here is this strange version: the husband alone was to die; his death was premeditated. He was to be killed by two persons—the accomplice, Alexandre Wolff perhaps, but more likely Mariette Wolff. . . . As for Mme. Japy, she was to live to see, and later on be a 'witness' who would confirm the breaking in of the murderers. Only, by forcing a gag into her mouth, the aggressors acted too brutally; they only aimed at a 'sham,' but they went as far as reality—that is, suffocation, asphyxia. Instead of a living witness: a corpse.

. . . "Why have I called this version a strange one? Merely because it supposes that the criminals wanted to let Mme. Japy live. Now, investigations show that, on the contrary, the death of Mme. Japy was a decided thing, and that almost certainly the murderers began by killing her. In order to kill her, the miscreants did not only force into her mouth a large gag with such violence that one false tooth, pushed back into the throat, was broken; they strangled her with a cord fastened twice round her neck. Thus with this death, wilfully caused by strangulation, it is impossible to speak of a 'witness' whom Mme. Steinheil and her accomplice needed for their scheme. And then would not Mme. Steinheil really have been compromising and giving herself away if she had thus prepared, as it were, the evidence of her mother against Mariette or her son? But the Advocate-General means that Mme.

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Japy would have remained silent! But in that case, instead of a 'witness,' she would have become an accomplice herself. As you see, gentlemen of the jury, this version is but one more fable to add to all the fables in this affair. And would you like to know whence it comes? It is very simple. There is a newspaper, the *Matin*, of which we must speak here without complacency or fear. It was in the *Matin*, Monsieur l'Avocat General, that you found this gruesome remark: '*My mother, she was the alibi.*' A pitiful joke that you have twisted in a different but no more successful form. For in the *Matin* this sentence, 'My mother, that was the alibi,' meant that Mme. Steinheil, in order not to have been accused of having killed her husband, had thought it necessary to kill her mother. Nothing more or less! Only, the *Matin* was too precise. It stated that Mme. Steinheil had made that statement to some one who, to relieve her conscience, had rushed to the newspaper's office. It was easy to annihilate that tale. I went to the prison and showed the *Matin* article to Mme. Steinheil. Without hesitation she wrote at once to Judge André, asking to be confronted with the person who it was said had heard the confession. Then came a difficulty: it was impossible to find that person; she had vanished into space." . . .

My counsel proceeded to refute the theory of the Prosecution, who stated that there were no burglars, because entrance had not been *forced* into the house, because no weapons had been brought in from outside . . . and for other reasons which have already been discussed at length such as: No jewels stolen, no money taken, no real disorder, &c.

Maître Aubin had no difficulty in showing that the burglars needed no skeleton keys since the doors were open. They had placed a ladder near a window of the kitchen, but finding that the kitchen door was open, they entered that way. As for the statement that no "instruments of the crime" were brought in from outside, how did the prosecution know that? All that was known was that the murderers used cords and wadding gags. It was proved that the cord with which M. Steinheil was strangled came from the kitchen cupboard, open, and opposite the door. But the cords with which Mme. Japy was

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strangled and Mme. Steinheil bound did not come from the house. As for the gags, what could be more natural than that the murderers would use some of the wadding which they found in my mother's room.

My counsel's next task was to answer the statements that there had been no serious binding, no gag in my mouth, and that I had never been seriously ill.

Concerning the last point I may mention that it was chiefly based on the statement made by Mlle. Vogler, who from June 5th to July 5th, 1908, nursed me first at the d'Arlon's and afterwards at my Bellevue villa. Although I was kept alive by sea-water and morphia injections, this nurse did not hesitate to state that my illness was "pure comedy," that my temperature was always normal, and further that "every night at the same hour—between midnight and 1 A.M. Mme. Steinheil used to jump out of bed and wail: 'I am afraid.' Her eyes were dry. I felt her pulse and found it as steady as my own."

(*Dossier* Cote 3225–3250)

My counsel merely remarked: "One cannot think of everything: Mlle. Vogler forgot this letter sent by her to Mme. Steinheil.

"Friday, *November 6th.*

"DEAR MADAM,—What martyrdom you are still enduring! Have they not made you suffer enough! This morning I read in the *Matin* of the dreadful day you spent at Boulogne. How you must suffer when you think of that awful day of torture. *If, however, it is ever necessary to prove how much you have suffered through fever and what horrible nights of delirium you went through,* don't forget that I am at your disposal to testify to it. I follow your affair daily. How glad I should be for your sake if the murderers were found. If you have enemies, dear Madame, remember that there are also persons who share your sorrow. Accept, dear Madame, all my wishes for a speedy recovery and my sincere greetings.

"Your Nurse,

"MARGUERITE."

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This letter was written on November 6th, 1908. The evidence from which I have quoted was given before M. André on December 8th, 1908, and on January 18th, 1909. I was in prison at the time, and Mlle. Vogler evidently feared no contradiction. . . .

I must in all fairness add here that this most important letter was handed, at the time of the trial, by M. de Labruyère to my counsel, and it does him great credit.

M. de Labruyère happened to be with me when the letter reached me, and, having read it, he realised its importance and asked for it, saying he would have it published in the *Matin*. This was never done, and later, when I asked M. de Labruyère to return the letter to me, he was unable to find it. He discovered it, however, in time, and, as I have just stated, loyally handed it to Maître Aubin at my trial.

Three more brief quotations from Maître Aubin's speech:

". . . Ah, how many errors and shufflings would have been avoided if this fact, ascertained by Dr. Balthazard had been better interpreted: The mother was killed first and the husband afterwards; they both left their beds of their own free will, and the husband was undoubtedly strangled whilst he went to the assistance of his mother-in-law.

"How in such circumstances, can one imagine that Mme. Steinheil is guilty? If she had premeditated committing the crime alone or with an accomplice, would she not have been on the watch in those bed-rooms where she could have easily moved about without arousing suspicions? Would she not have acted with perfidy and trickery in order to deal death or to have death dealt, so that it might be the more certain and the more rapid? Would she not have gone treacherously to the bed of her mother or of her husband in order to make sure that they were asleep and to take advantage of the fact? . . . But they were both killed, not only when awake, but when out of their beds? Well, then, I say that according to this it is impossible to eliminate the miscreants, for, cannot you see that if Mme. Steinheil were guilty of the murder of her husband alone, as it is said to-day, or of the murder of her husband and mother as it was thought before, they would not have gone to

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I. MY COUNSEL, MAITRE A. AUBIN
II. THE JUDGE, M. DE VALLES
III. THE ADVOCATE-GENERAL, M. TROUARD RIOLLE

Sketches by Mme. Steinheil

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meet death, but rather death would have come to them."

Maître Aubin then fully explained the all-importance of the "stolen black gowns," and the part certain journalists had played in the Impasse Ronsin affair. His last words referred to my love for my Marthe.

". . . I call to my side this pure and noble child; I want her close to me, stretching her arms appealingly towards you and defending her mother! These two unfortunate beings, how many tears they have already shed, how many tears they will still shed! Ah, gentlemen of the jury, give them the means to console one another and to forget together . . . whilst blessing your justice."

My counsel has ceased speaking. There is a moment of silence, and that silence drags me out of my torpor. I raised my head with a last effort, and I see hundreds of eager faces all turned towards the judge . . . M. de Valles is now speaking. I can hardly hear, but from a few words: "did the prisoner . . . on May 30th–31st, 1908 . . . murder . . ." I realise that he is reading to the jury the question to which they will have to reply.

I do not understand, I do not know . . . the Judge rises, the jurors file out . . . I am sobbing, sobbing. . . .

I am carried away from the dock. The cooler air in the guards' room refreshes me. I am made to drink some tea and all kinds of men stand before me speaking words of encouragement . . . I have been told that I laughed and chatted. . . . Everything is possible. . . .

I remember that the guards handed me post-card after post-card of myself—begging me to sign them. I could hardly hold the pen, and the number of cards was endless. Poor soldiers; they had been good to me in their own simple way, and they said that they could get quite a deal of money for cards with my autograph. . . . How happy they all looked.

Everybody says I shall be acquitted in a moment. Doctor Socquet tells me: "When the jury give their verdict, I will listen and then rush to you. If you see me, that'll mean that

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you are acquitted; if I don't come, well, you will know. If things go wrong, I shall not have the courage to come."

Some one tells me that it is eleven o'clock. The jury has been away fifteen minutes already. Fifteen minutes, and they have not yet found that I am innocent. How is it possible?

A bell rings.

I rise as if electrified. . . . And then some one tells me that the jury have summoned the President and Maître Aubin. They want to be enlightened on some point. . . . The guards were whispering, and suddenly an unspeakable terror seizes me. They have talked aloud and cheerfully until now; they do not want me to hear the dreadful truth. . . .

A quarter past eleven. Half-past eleven. A quarter to twelve. Midnight. . . . Still nothing!

Will this martyrdom never end? What right has any one to make me suffer so? And where is Marthe, my own child. If she were only here, perhaps I could bear this agony. . . . How she must suffer, if she knows . . .

More people enter the guards' room. The two old ushers, who have seen many, many such trials, come to see me. One hails from my own province, the other acts at night as *maître d'hôtel* and has seen me at many important dinners. One of them mutters in my ear: "Madame, don't you worry about anything. I am used to all this. Those jurors are all right; as sure as I stand here you will be acquitted, they can't help knowing that you are innocent. . . . Look here! The minute the verdict is known, I'll come to the door there and say, 'Hoo!' Then raise your head, enter bravely in the dock, for the last time and show them all who you are."

Then I hear two men discussing in the corridor: "I tell you," says one of them, "that she is done for. If the jury wanted to acquit her, they would not summon the President, and the whole thing would have been over long ago!"

A guard tells me: "It's no longer the 13th of November now, but the 14th. There's luck for you!" and he hands me a few more cards to sign. . . .

A quarter past twelve. . . . Half-past twelve. The bell again.

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No, the time has not yet come. The jurors want more explanations. This second shock has a merciful effect. It takes out of me the last spark of vitality. Everything is blank. I wait for hours, for days, now, for I no longer know what I am waiting for. There is a small crowd around me, and they all say, "Courage, have courage." Of course, I have courage. I have had courage for the past eighteen months; what does anything matter!

A quarter to one. . . . One o'clock. . . . A quarter past one. Now I feel it. Something is going to happen! . . .

The bell rings twice.

I see Doctor Socquet, quite pale; I hear some one cry, "Hoo!" and then I hear the most terrible, the most awe-inspiring, the most maddening storm I have ever heard. . . . I realised afterwards that what I heard at that unforgettable moment were the screams of enthusiasm and the frantic applause of hundreds of people who had heard the verdict: I was acquitted. . . . But I did not know. How could I understand anything! . . .

Guards rushed to me and carried me to the Court. The light dazzled me, and the storm rose again, more overwhelming than before. I vaguely saw hundreds of hands raised towards me . . . I saw hundreds of radiant faces shouting: "Bravo . . . Bravo . . . Acquitted . . . Acquitted. . . ." Still I didn't understand. I took those cries for threats, and believed all those hands wanted to seize me, to tear me to pieces . . . And then I looked at the jury, and among all those faces I saw one smiling, and then at last, I understood, and fell back.

Alas, alas. The one face in the world I had so longed to see was not there. . . .

A room. . . . People are pressing my hand, kissing it, and I see tears in many eyes . . . and I hear the words, repeated over and over again: "What a trial. What a trial. . . ."

A triumph! Good God! . . . Marthe is not there.

Never mind what happened afterwards. Doctor Socquet helped me once more, and others too. There were discussions,

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endless discussions as to how I was to be smuggled away. And there were journalists clambering for my "impressions . . ." I asked for my daughter to every one . . . then I begged to be taken home, but was told it was impossible . . . The daughter of the Director of the *Dépôt* most generously consented to "escape" in a motor-car, and thus to "draw" the journalists, whilst in another motor-car I was taken, with Maître Steinhardt, and I believe a Press photographer, to a hotel. I have been told that I was extremely bright and gay on the way. . . . At the hotel, I was told to sit whilst my photograph was being taken, hurriedly, and then I lay on a bed for a short time. . . . Early in the morning I was taken by motor-car to a nursing home at Le Vésinet, and on the way, I was bright and gay again, and I was photographed again!

I have heard that the photographer was well paid for his work, and that he even sold for a substantial sum a series of articles—to the *Matin*, of course—about that drive from the Palace of Justice to the Terminus Hotel, and the drive from the Terminus Hotel to Le Vésinet, in which he described at length and in fluent and sensational style, all the bright and gay things he imagined I had said and done. . . .

But why, God of Mercy, was not my Marthe near me?

The reader must wonder, as I have long done myself, what exactly took place during the two hundred minutes that the jury deliberated.

In a quite indirect way, which, for obvious reasons I cannot divulge here, I have been able to ascertain the details of the long-drawn deliberation. These details are irrefutable:

An overwhelming majority of the jurors had decided that I was guilty, but the two or three who were in favour of an acquittal fought so strongly that long discussions ensued.

When the foreman rang the bell to summon the President, it was to ask questions about the murder of Mme. Japy, for the majority was of opinion that I had strangled not only my husband, but had also done my mother to death! . . . And this although the Advocate General himself, in his speech for the Prosecution, had withdrawn the charge of matricide.

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Another discussion ensued, and one or two jurors wavered. Then, after an hour, the President, M. Trouard-Riolle and Maître Aubin were once more summoned about the eventual wording of the verdict. After a fierce discussion, in which the stolen black gowns were the chief subject, my innocence appeared evident to one or two more jurors, and finally there were seven for an acquittal and five for a conviction. And thus I was acquitted after being for so long, without knowing it, so near to . . . the scaffold!

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CHAPTER XXXI

AFTER THE VERDICT

THE nursing home to which I had been taken was that of Dr. Raffegeau and Dr. Mignon. My sister, Mme. Seyrig, had been there as a patient during a period of complete nervous prostration.

In despair and anguish, I asked Dr. Raffegeau where my daughter was, but he could not tell me, alas; he merely said: "Your brother-in-law telegraphed to me asking that I should reserve a room for you here where you would be able to recover. I am going to put you up in a pretty little pavilion, in the park of my establishment, and my wife and Mme. Mignon will keep you company."

"But Marthe? . . ."

"She will no doubt be here soon . . ."

I spent that Sunday sitting at the window, watching the road and waiting for my daughter. Who was keeping her away from me? How she must be suffering, and how I suffered! . . . The noise of every motor-car that passed made my heart beat faster and more painfully, but Marthe did not come.

An automobile stopped near the house. My younger sister and my brother entered the room.

"My daughter?"

"Courage. She will come . . . but we cannot find her; we don't know where she is. Chabrier is not at the Impasse Ronsin either . . . the house is shut up . . ."

I rose and said: "Then, *I* will find her. I start at once!" They compelled me to sit down: "You cannot go out, you

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are too weak and you will be followed; you will come to grief . . ."

I read in their faces what they meant. In spite of my acquittal, people still hated me.—I heard afterwards that whilst the verdict was greeted with shouts of triumph in the Court, where people had learned to know me and had realised my innocence, the crowd outside the Palace of Justice, when they heard of my acquittal, grew angry and shouted "Death!" and "Guillotine!"—and I understood that the absence of my daughter at the close of the trial, the fact that she had not joined her mother, was interpreted as a sign of my guilt. "If Mme. Steinheil were really innocent, her daughter would have rushed into her arms. Instead of that, Marthe avoids her mother, therefore that mother is a criminal!" . . . How many times I have heard that terrible piece of "logic"!

I beseeched my brother and my sister to find Marthe, and they promised to help me. Then, the "photographer" and his wife said they would search for Marthe and bring her to me . . .

The Press succeeded in discovering my retreat, and on the Sunday evening Dr. Raffegeau said to me: "I'll take you, in a roundabout way, through the park, to my house, and from there we'll go to the house of my colleague."

I dined at the house of the Mignons with their three charming and beautiful children, a boy of about ten, a girl of nine or eight, and an adorable little girl of three, who all began calling me "auntie," and were all so caressing and affectionate that I forgot my sorrow a little.

The next day Maître Aubin came with a large bag full of letters and telegrams for me, and he, too, promised to find my daughter. Drs. Raffegeau and Mignon nursed me with great devotion. Mme. Seyrig returned to say that Marthe had no doubt gone to the country, and that it was impossible to trace her. It suddenly occurred to me that she had probably been taken to Nogent-sur-Seine, near Troyes, to the country seat of the B's. (The latter are not "members of the family," but are considered as such. A son of M. B. married a daughter of one of M. Steinheil's sisters.)

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I was ill, in bed, wringing my hands in despair, for I had thought that after my acquittal all would be bright and happy, and I now found out my sad mistake—when Dr. Raffegeau came in with Mme. Mignon, who said: "A lady, your elder sister, has just arrived. She wants to see you. She is in tears, and keeps repeating: 'My poor Meg! How I long to be with her! How she must suffer!' . . . She is in full mourning, and says she comes from Beaucourt, where she prayed on her—and your—mother's tomb. She has beseeched me to speak to you; she must see you. . . . What am I to do?" . . .

I replied: "No, no . . . I cannot believe my sister, Mme. Herr, would come. . . . We are not on very good terms. . . . Perhaps that woman is sent by some newspaper?" . . .

"Oh, no," said Dr. Raffegeau. "She has been saying: 'I dread the Press, I hope I have not been followed.' She looks so alarmed and grieved. She asks if your hair has turned white, whether you are very ill . . . she seems very concerned. I really believe she is your sister. . . . She wants to see you alone."

"Never!" I exclaimed. "I refuse to be left alone, Doctor . . . Mme. Mignon must remain with me." . . .

Mme. Mignon's baby-daughter was sitting on my bed. The door opened and my "sister" was ushered in. She wore a wide cloak; a thick veil fell over her face. She rushed to me and wailed: "Oh, my poor Meg, my poor darling!" and kissed me. . . . I did not recognise the voice of Mme. Herr, yet I said: "It is you, Juliette? . . ."

"Yes, dear; I have come. . . . I couldn't remain away from you any longer." . . .

I tore my "sister's" veil from her head and saw the face of a woman whom I had never seen before. "Madame," I cried, "you are not my sister! What are you doing here? Leave this room at once!"

The little girl on my bed was frightened; Madame Mignon was staring in amazement.

The woman turned to her and said in deeply grieved tones: "How terrible! Meg is so ill she cannot recognise her own

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sister! She has lost her reason!" . . . Then, bending over my bed, she whispered to me: "Not a word! Be calm. . . . I am sent by the *Matin;* I am bringing you a fortune. . . . Only listen to me." . . .

"The *Matin!* . . . Have they not done me enough harm yet! Go, Madame. . . . Mme. Mignon, please show this woman out." . . .

The impostor played her part well. She sobbed, looked pitifully at me, and kept saying as she withdrew: "My poor sister! How terrible! She has gone mad!" . . . It appears that she continued her lamentations until the moment she stepped into the motor-car that had brought her, and so convincing was her simulated grief that Mme. Mignon, who accompanied her to the door, asked me, when she came back, if I were sure that the lady was not my sister!

A long report of that brief "interview" appeared, of course, in the *Matin* the next morning. The article was laudatory and almost kind. . . . The author had probably some conscience left. And the *Matin* took care to explain that the sensational interview had been brought to them.

Dr. Raffegeau, after this, had to arrange a sham removal. Some one was dressed in my clothes and taken away in an automobile to make the spying journalists believe that I left the house. . . . And after that I had some peace.

Maître Aubin came frequently, carrying hundreds of letters and telegrams for me from all parts of the world. Several contained the worst possible threats and insults, and many were fantastic offers by music-hall managers—from every part of France and Europe, from the United States and South America! Some writers stated that they had a sketch or a play ready, and asked me to play the part of the heroine (a woman accused of murder, of course!), and others asked me merely to "show" myself for ten minutes on the stage. There were scores of proposals that I should sing, and offers from cinematograph and talking-machine firms. A number of unknown authors asked me to sign their books with my name: it would sell the books at once, and they would let me have a fair

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proportion of the profits. . . . And there were dozens of offers of marriage; from the inevitable Russian "prince," the Peruvian mine-owner, and the great Spanish nobleman—poor, but with so many famous ancestors, to the equally inevitable American magnate and the romantic youth—of any country—anxious to devote his life to avenging me. . . .

There were letters of hotel proprietors in various lands explaining the great benefit which my health would derive from a stay in their establishments; price-lists from wine-merchants, patent-medicine makers and travelling agencies who swore that their wines, their drugs or a journey would be my salvation. There were letters from autograph-hunters; letters asking me to allow the writer to give my name to some product he manufactured: a soap, a potato-peeler, a varnish, a patent food, a scent . . . two letters written in Latin verse, and one in Greek iambics! . . .

But the overwhelming majority came from persons who had followed my case and expressed their heartfelt sympathy. They were in a dozen different languages, but chiefly in French, English, and German. Of the letters that reached me, I have kept a few score. They include several kind messages signed by groups of officers and non-commissioned officers, by a whole "class" of students, by all the employees of a firm, a bank or a factory: letters from clergymen quoting the Bible, and from priests quoting the "Imitation"; letters from old men and women, and letters from mere children. . . . A little girl wrote from Manchester: "My parents don't know of this letter, but when I am grown up—in six years—I will come to you and comfort you, and I will play the piano for you, for I have heard that you are fond of music. . . ." From Kansas City, U. S. A., came a long message of congratulations signed by a large number of workmen; a similar one reached me from Rome and another from Moscow. Many letters and telegrams came from people in the Beaucourt district who had known me or my father and mother; and there came many messages like the following, which is dated "Paris, November 14th, 1909": "Madame, we are sitting in a café, the whole family gathered, and we read that you are free. We

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are only simple people and can only say that we breathe again. . . . The jury has recognised your innocence, at last. We salute you, Madame, for your pluck, and we feel how terribly you have suffered. We are all so happy for you and your dear daughter! Signed: A family of honest people."

I thank all those friends, far and near. Their messages, French and foreign, no doubt helped me to bear my heavy cross.

Maître Aubin came often to see me and naturally we talked of what was now "the past." . . . With him I wrote a letter of apology to Mr. Burlingham. I had also many affairs to settle with Maître Jousselin, my devoted solicitor.

The "photographer" who had promised to find my daughter told me that he was on her tracks and would bring her to me. He suggested that a portrait of mine, taken now, would be a happy surprise for Marthe, and begged me to sit for my portrait, at the window, in Mme. Mignon's room. . . .

The next day—I was in bed, by order of Dr. Raffegeau—when I was told, at about 4 P.M. that Marthe was there!

The doctor said: "I would have liked you to see your daughter alone, but M. Chabrier who is with her as well as Mme. Seyrig, has told me and my wife, in a most offensive tone: 'Mlle. Marthe shall see her mother only in *my* presence, otherwise she will not see her at all.'"

I said that under such conditions I would rather not see my child, and that M. Chabrier had no authority whatever over her. . . . My mind was in a whirl. . . . Dr. Raffegeau begged me to admit M. Chabrier and take no notice.

I heard slow weary steps on the staircase. . . . Was Marthe ill? . . . She entered, pale, haggard, almost unrecognisable, the poor darling. My sister held her on one side; M. Chabrier on the other. Marthe was led to my bed, and then I saw in her face a strange expression which I had never before seen there. I stretched out my arms to her, but, pulled back by M. Chabrier, she retreated from me. . . . I lost all courage, all strength, all hope. . . .

"What is the matter? . . . You are coming back to me, Marthe?"

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My child tried to speak.

"She is ill, she cannot talk . . ." said Mme. Seyrig. "She has come to tell you. . . . Tell her yourself, Marthe . . . Try." . . .

"Yes," I said, "tell me yourself . . . everything . . . the whole truth." . . .

Marthe turned her tear-bedimmed eyes on M. Chabrier, who was standing near my bed facing her, and then in a hardly audible voice, she said, as though she were trying to repeat a lesson: "After all that has happened . . . you understand." . . . She stopped, muttered "I am stifling," caught her breath and added: "I have come to say good-bye to you for ever." . . .

For nearly two years I have heard those words, day after day, night after night, echoing in my mind, but at the time when they were spoken, I did not realise all that they meant.

"Are you going into a convent, then?" I asked.

"No."

"Where are you going to?"

"I cannot tell you."

"But it cannot be, Marthe. . . . I will not let you go."

"She is her own mistress," said some one. "She must forget you as you must try to forget her."

"Is it Pierre, your fiancé, who demands this?" I asked.

Marthe eagerly seized this pretext. The horrible scene was as painful to her as to me.

"Yes . . . It is for Pierre." . . .

"He is going to marry you, after all, if you don't see me again, is that it?" . . . I was in tears now. . . . I added: "Marthe, if you wish it, *I* will enter a convent. All I long for is your happiness." . . .

My child looked at me and it was clear that she longed to rush into my arms. . . .

"We had better go now," said some one. Marthe bent forward to kiss me. "Good-bye," I said. "You have always been my all in all . . . Remember, if ever you are abandoned by everybody, or unhappy, that you will still and always have your *maman*."

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I fell back on the bed. When I recovered consciousness Mme. Mignon and her dear children were around me, but *my* child had gone away, and for nearly two years, in spite of letters and entreaties, she never came to me.

Recently, my daughter joined me, at last, of her own free will, after craving my forgiveness—as if it had been necessary! She is living with me and the young Italian painter whose wife she became, in Paris, long after her engagement to the young Buisson had been broken off. For many weeks, we have spoken of the past and I know the truth now, the whole truth about that farewell meeting and those endless months of separation which all but cost me my life, and which made my child the most miserable of beings.

I will quote my daughter's own words, taken from a long letter which she sent me during the summer of 1911—and at a time when I had given up all hope of ever seeing her again, alas—when she became once more my own Marthe:

". . . At the end of October, after we agreed that I should no longer visit you at Saint-Lazare, I was taken to Nogent by the B's. I was kept in strict seclusion, was never allowed to go out or to read a newspaper. I knew nothing of what was going on at your trial, and yet, how I longed to know! All the time, I was being told the most horrible things about you, and given to understand that I should be ruined in every way if I ever saw you again. I was not well, we two had gone through so much, beloved mother, and all that I heard hurt me, and influenced me, though I did not believe it, of course. On Sunday morning, November 14th, Marie-Louise, my dear friend (a daughter of the B's) rushed into my room and shouted: 'Your mother is acquitted!' We both cried with joy for a long, long time. M. B., who always came from Saturday to Monday, said nothing. I have sometimes heard him take your part. . . . But some one else said furiously: 'The wretched woman; they have let her off. I wish she had been sentenced and guillotined!' I rushed to my room and sobbed bitterly.

"At about midnight, I and Marie-Louise heard the bell ring repeatedly. We dressed and went downstairs. Mme. B.

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looked through a window and said: 'The station 'bus is there. It is Chabrier.'

"Edouard (Chabrier) came in. He had seen Aubin in the morning and also 'the family'—all the uncles and aunts (on the Steinheil side). He said to me: 'Your mother is a wretch; I have heard she threatens to kill everybody unless you go to her!' . . . I was happy, for I longed so much to be with you. . . . There was a long discussion to decide whether I should be *allowed* to see you! Then Edouard drew a paper from his pocket and said: 'Copy this, just as it is, sign, and put the date. It is a letter to the Attorney-General, asking for protection. Your mother threatens all of us, even you.' Every one read the letter which I understood had been drawn up by 'the family' in Paris. I was ordered to copy it. The worst calamities would befall me and them all, if I didn't. I obeyed but was so upset that I dated the letter 'September' instead of 'November.' Edouard pocketed the letter, which, he said, he intended sending to the Attorney-General, through Uncle L. (a magistrate and brother-in-law of M. Steinheil) and I was allowed to go to bed. It was nearly perhaps on account of the wrong date, perhaps because it was all a trick to frighten me and make me believe that you were really threatening people's lives! You can understand, *maman*, in what state I was. I did believe much of what I was told, and began to think you had lost your reason, and really wanted to harm us all. Forgive me.

"The next morning, Edouard left for Paris. In the evening M. B. unexpectedly arrived, and said to me: 'Aunt Mimi (Mme. Seyrig) came to me in Paris to ask where you were. I had to admit that you were with us, and I have promised to let you go and see your mother.'

"I was taken to Paris to the B.'s house and thence to Uncle L., where a family council was held. The uncles and aunts and their children were there. . . . They warned me against you, terrorised me to such an extent, that I asked that I might not see you at all. I was so frightened and so ill. They made me swear to tell you that I would never see you again. 'If she insists,' they said, 'tell her you are "emancipated" and

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she has no right over you. You cannot be too severe with your mother, she wants to kill us all. We are all lost unless you talk to her. But make it clear to her that it is all over between you.'

"I saw Aunt Mimi, who told me you were going on the stage, and that the 'honour of the family' would be ruined. The next day she went to Le Vésinet by motor, and M. Chabrier followed by train; we got out at Le Pecq in order to escape the journalists, and walked to Le Vésinet. On the way M. Chabrier kept telling me what I was to tell you. I felt more dead than alive when I entered your room. . . . You know the rest, my poor darling *maman*.

"Afterwards I was taken back to Nogent, where for days I remained in bed, ill and miserable." . . .

During the days that followed my daughter's departure I was kept alive only by the devoted care of Dr. Raffegeau and Dr. Mignon, and by the tender devotion of their wives.

Some one said to me: "Your daughter is a Catholic; the priests have taken her from you." I at once thought of becoming a Catholic myself. My conversion would perhaps mean that my child would return to me. I summoned the Catholic priest of Le Vésinet, and had a long talk with him; but very honestly he told me: "Do not become a Catholic without absolute convictions. As for your daughter, I can only say that no priest has the right to take her away from you."

I had many conversations with my counsel. He and others gave me to understand that I should be happier and safer abroad than in France. Gradually I grew used to the idea of going to England. I had a few friends there. England was a land of liberty and order. Perhaps I should find there the rest my body so much needed, and the peace for which my mind was thirsting. . . .

Maître Aubin introduced M. Jacques Dhur, the well-known writer and journalist, to me—a sincere, forcible, fearless man, and it was agreed that I should write a few brief chapters telling of my long calvary. . . . The money would be most use-

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ful to me. M. Dhur assisted me. The articles were for the *Journal*, but for some reason they were not published.

At the beginning of December (1909) I was ready to go to England. Dr. Mignon, on account of my very indifferent health, had offered to accompany me to London, where he would place me under the care of a doctor whom he knew. I bade good-bye to Dr. Raffegeau and his wife, then to Mme. Mignon and her charming children, who had all been so admirably devoted to me.

At night—I was to take the 9 P.M. train for Charing Cross—I drove to Paris in a motor-car with M. Dhur and Dr. Mignon. They took me to a fashionable restaurant where we were met by one or two of M. Dhur's colleagues. I was bewildered. . . . I had not been in a restaurant for over a year and a half. We sat at a table in a small room decorated with orchids and roses. These friends wished to lessen the feelings of sadness which they knew must hang over one who was about to go into exile.

"In order that the waiters may not guess who you are, and to avoid the restaurant being besieged, we will suppose that you are Mme. —— the air-woman," said one; and gaily they began asking me questions about my impressions in the air, the motor I preferred, the make of my aeroplane propeller.

We went to the Gare du Nord. I was tired, nervous and so sad. . . . I was about to leave Paris, where I had lived twenty years, Paris, which I loved in spite of all that I had suffered there. . . . I went to buy a newspaper but saw my name in a large heading, and hurried away. M. Dhur told me: "Be careful; I believe there are two English journalists in the train." A whistle blew; hands grasped mine; the train started, and we went into the night. . . .

On the way, the shrewd English newspaper-men spoke to Dr. Mignon and very politely asked for the privilege of a brief interview with me, and said the journal to which they belonged was ready to pay anything for a series of articles signed by me. Dr. Mignon said he could not allow them to speak to me.

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On the Channel boat, I felt more despondent than ever. It was cold, the wind was so keen, and the shores of France were disappearing.

The train stopped in London at a station before Charing Cross, and one of the English journalists rushed in and said: "Madame, I know there are scores of photographers and newspaper people awaiting you at Charing Cross. Believe me, you had better step out here." It was true, and it was kind, but, alas, before Dr. Mignon and I—we were both rather numb and bewildered—could follow this good advice, the train started again.

I had hardly set my foot on the platform at Charing Cross when flashlight explosions resounded all around me and some forty journalists pressed eagerly, violently even, about me. Some spoke French—they were the London correspondents of Parisian newspapers; others spoke English or in broken French. I pushed Dr. Mignon into a cab and jumped in after him. Motor-cars followed us. I said to the driver: "Hotel . . . Find! . . ."

It was now about 6 A.M. We tried to get rooms at one hotel but were turned away on account of the journalists. We tried another, were again refused; then yet another. The journalists still followed. Desperate, I walked up to them and begged for pity.

I snatched two hours rest and then I had to leave the hotel. The manager was courteous and generously allowed Dr. Mignon and me one hour more, and said he would help us to hoodwink the Press. A friend of my counsel, an English solicitor, was summoned to my assistance by telephone. He came and I left with him whilst the Doctor made his exit by another door after making an appointment. Alas, we were seen and followed, and it was by sheer luck, owing to a block in the traffic, that I was able to elude my pursuers.

What a day! We drove and then walked. Rain poured down. It was dark when at last Dr. Mignon found us.

We walked through narrow, ill-lit streets and reached a small boarding-house kept by a German, where I was well re-

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ceived. I was tired, dispirited, ill. Our luggage had been left at the station. I dined with Dr. Mignon at the D.'s, where, after spending two nights at the German boarding-house, I stayed for a few weeks until I found a small house for myself.

Three or four days after my arrival in London and when I had somewhat recovered from so many successive shocks, Dr. Mignon returned to France.

My life in England can be briefly described. I found a few trusty English friends who were not aware of my identity at first, but who, when I disclosed it, became only the more devoted. I found the rest and the peace of mind I so sorely needed . . . I made my little home as beautiful as I could, and found in music, in reading, and in long walks about the country the relaxation and consolation without which I could not have lived. I have learned to love England and the English. Perhaps as regards conversation, enthusiasm, imagination and artistic inclination I have found my few English friends—both men and women—somewhat different from the people who flocked to my Parisian salon. But I have found them far superior in other and more important qualities. They are perhaps less unconventional, less brilliant and witty, but they are more reliable and trustworthy; less versatile and assimilative, but more genuine, earnest and steady.

Towards the end of December, the furniture at the Impasse Ronsin was sold, at my request, after I had ordered part of it to be sent to England. I had before written to my daughter offering her to keep everything she desired. The letter, however, was *never* shown to her, and, later on, I discovered why. As a matter of fact, not a single one of the numerous letters I sent to my child was ever handed to her.

Certain newspapers seized the opportunity of that sale to attack me once more as "an ignoble mother, ruining her child." When I saw, however, the list of the few things that had been sold, I thought that Marthe must have kept a great many things, and felt somewhat relieved. At the same time, I received from the person who represented me in Paris at the

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sale, a note: "Please hand back to Mme. Steinheil the enclosed letter, which no doubt comes from her. I shall likewise return anything she may send me, as I wish to have nothing to do with her. Signed: Chabrier."

In March 1910 I had to go to Paris to settle various business matters, and I remained there three days with my hair powdered to change my appearance. I saw my solicitor and settled various matters with him. I wrote to my daughter beseeching her to meet me a few hours before my departure, at Maître Aubin's. There, I found that Marthe had not come . . . and I also found, outside, a number of journalists and photographers who had been warned of my arrival by a kind soul.

I was broken-hearted at not seeing my child. I remained for many hours at my counsel's, and, at night, managed to hoodwink the journalists and to reach the Gare du Nord, where I entrained for London.

I was desperate. I wrote a long letter to Marthe. M. Chabrier read it, told my daughter that it contained threats and *compelled her to write and sign the following letter, from a copy he himself prepared:*

Paris, *March 12th, 1910.*

Maître J. has handed me a letter from you to which I must reply telling you for the last time what you refuse to understand. The irrevocable decision I have taken of not seeing you again has not been dictated to me by any one. I have no advisers. My conduct and my actions arise solely from my conscience. I cannot forget the long sufferings and the ruin of my poor father, and I think that certain cruel recollections can break certain bonds. You refuse the only proof of disinterestedness I had asked you—the gift of the house in the Impasse Ronsin, and you accuse my imaginary adviser of that refusal, and then you offer me your help to bear the difficulties of life, a life which you created for me by your will and acts, a life very painful and sad and for ever broken. I repeat that I have taken my decision alone. You will never see me

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again. I must even ask you not to write to me any more, for there can be nothing between us except the absolute silence which separates two beings who ignore one another for ever.

"M. STEINHEIL."

It was of course easy for me to see at once that this ungrammatical and absurd letter had *not* been written by my daughter! She had not, thank Heaven, that kind of style, and I readily guessed who was the instigator of the letter. But I did not pay much attention to all this; I only saw that Marthe was in need, and although she had refused—or rather, I had been told she had refused—everything I so gladly offered her, I went to the French Consul-General in London and signed a paper by which I renounced the ownership of my Paris house and made it over to my daughter.

A month later, being terribly anxious about her, so anxious indeed that I once more fell seriously ill and had to be visited three times a day by a doctor, for several weeks, I persuaded a devoted friend to go to Paris and talk to my daughter. My friend went to the Impasse Ronsin and was received by M. Chabrier, who said he was very sorry but Mlle. Marthe was away in the country. My friend insisted, explained the gravity of my illness and begged for my daughter's address. It was in vain.

Since then, Marthe has told me that she was in the house that day, that she had insisted upon seeing the person I had sent to her, but that M. Chabrier, in whom she still had the greatest confidence, had locked her up in her room during the interview.

Again I sent letters to Marthe, but still no reply came. I tried to forget my only child, but a mother never forgets. I travelled through Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Italy—never France—and I recovered, but later despair seized me once more and for the second time in one year, I suffered from severe illness.

New Year 1911. I spent the day writing a long letter to Marthe, and afterwards, I wrote my will, for, in spite of my few devoted friends, in spite of music and good books, life

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didn't seem worth living—without my daughter—and when one has such thoughts, the end soon comes. In my case I longed to die.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, I waited and waited for news from my daughter . . . Once, French newspapers declared that she was about to enter a convent of Carmelites, and later a description of how my daughter took the veil was even published . . . Then the whole story was denied. From time to time, a kind-hearted woman in Paris wrote to me words like these: "I saw Mlle. Marthe passing in a street, yesterday . . . she looked pale but otherwise well . . ."

Then in June 1911, on a day which I shall never forget—the happiest day of my life since the day when in her childhood, Marthe recovered from a grave illness—I received a letter from my daughter, and it seemed, as I read each word, as though happiness ran through my very blood, as though life had a new meaning, a marvellous, divine, undreamed of, meaning.

She asked to be forgiven. She had been influenced against me; she had been made to dread me. For over a year and a half, she had been a toy in the hands of a few unscrupulous persons, and had been made to suffer endlessly—and yet she had felt almost grateful to these false guardians, because considering herself abandoned by nearly all, and even by me, she was glad to think that at least these two or three persons did not quite treat her as a pariah. My heart bled as I read her long letter and without reading it to the end, I hastened to write to her that I adored her, that I had always adored her, and that whatever happened, she could rely on me.

Afterwards, I received many other letters from Marthe. I read with amazement and despair that she was all alone in the world, alone to fight the great battle of life. . . . And she so young, so frail!

I read that she had been abjectly deceived, that she had been made to sign all kind of papers, blindly. I read that she had starved, in her own house, although she paid for her board. I read that no sarcasm, no insults had been spared the poor

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child. She had been advised to enter a convent, and had been told: "That is the wisest thing you could do. You will be happy there; as for the house, you can give it us before you become a nun." . . . When "the family" saw that Marthe had no leaning towards convent life, they found a would-be husband for her, a young nonentity, who resided in far-away California, and who was staying in Paris at the time. . . . If she followed him to America, she could still leave the house to her protectors.

But although she was worn and miserable, although she had actually to do the washing-up and clean the house; although she spent fourteen to sixteen hours out of every twenty-four in sewing and embroidering, in order to earn her living; although when she returned a little late at night after running through the streets of Paris to deliver her work, she found only a little chocolate in front of her door—instead of the dinner for which she paid—or *nothing at all*, Marthe, the brave little creature, did not lose heart, and still trusted her so-called guardians. She still allowed herself to be led astray, did not see the truth, or understand why she was prevented from seeing her mother, or even corresponding with her.

The large house in the Impasse Ronsin which, after the murder I had had divided into a number of apartments, was let to various persons—and that was Marthe's chief source of income—but she was not even allowed to see the different contracts and leases. She was merely asked to sign at the foot of documents which she had not even read. Then, when serious difficulties arose, her protectors left her.

It was only when she was near me—when, for instance, I showed her certain documents—that the scales quite fell from her eyes.

Marthe, who had met a young Italian painter called R. del Perugia, was gradually drawn to the young man's straightforward and attractive nature, and both of them soon wrote asking for my consent to their marriage. I granted it, of course.

At the marriage of these two children, in Paris, journalists and photographers again harassed them. There was a free

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fight on the very steps of the church, and another almost before the altar itself, where snapshotters made a sudden appearance. Two or three persons were knocked down, and Marthe faltered. After the ceremony the poor child had to be comforted by the priests, and smuggled away by them.

I exchanged many letters with Marthe and her young husband, and then they came to spend a few months with me.

Not even the greatest of poets could ever describe my meeting with Marthe, after those months of agony, nor could the greatest composer express in music our feelings of heavenly joy! All that I and Marthe had gone through—and the reader knows by now what those experiences have been—vanished at the moment when we held each other in a fond embrace. . . .

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CHAPTER XXXII

CONCLUSION

My Memoirs have come to an end.

I have tried not to be bitter or revengeful, and it is only when I have had to justify myself or vindicate my daughter that I have mentioned certain facts, certain documents, or certain names; and I have no doubt that the reader will agree with me that I have done this only when it has been absolutely necessary.

I have been asked, time after time, for my theory of the crime. I have turned that terrible problem over and over in my mind ever since the awful night of May 30th–31st, 1908, until at times I have well nigh lost my reason—and I have no theory.

Sometimes, it seems to me that the murderers were models who knew my husband. Sometimes, I think the crime was committed by persons who were in still closer touch with my husband and myself, or with one of us. Sometimes, I fancy that the instigator of the crime was a man who was in love with me. And finally, I sometimes fancy that the drama must have taken place as follows:

A man, a suspicious character, a *declassé*, hears or discovers that there are important political documents in my house. Perhaps he knows my husband, perhaps he knows me, more or less. He goes to some official—I say official for the lack of a more adequate word—and tells him he can secure certain political papers of much importance, papers that would, if they were divulged, cause much embarrassment, to say the least, to many prominent persons. He wants money, and possibly de-

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mands a document that seals the bargain as it were. Being a professional malefactor, he decides to steal something else besides the Faure documents. He knows that I possess pearls and handsome jewels. . . . Possibly, he is acquainted with the mysterious foreign personage, whom my husband befriended, the Jew, who, perhaps, occasionally attends the performances at the Hebrew Theatre, and knows that baskets of costumes are left unattended in the corridor of that theatre. Being a professional malefactor, he is a coward, and since there may be "some trouble," he decides that he had better not do the work alone. He and his friends to whom he has merely spoken of jewels and money—not of documents, for that he reserves for himself—examine the house; and possibly they are the men whom neighbours have seen lurking in the Impasse Ronsin. They have secured cards of invitation to the exhibition of M. Steinheil's works, and one of them lost his card in the Underground on the day of the crime. That exhibition made it possible for them to enter the house at a time when it was crowded, and when, therefore, their movements would not be observed. Besides, one and possibly two of the gang, know the house well, already.

Plans are carefully laid. We are in May. They have discovered that the Steinheils almost invariably spend the week-ends at Bellevue at this time of the year. It will be quite easy to commit the burglary.

On May 30th one of the gang steals the black gowns from the Hebrew Theatre early in the evening. Towards midnight the three men, carrying bags containing their disguises enter the Impasse. Possibly there are four of them; the fourth remained on watch in the garden. There is also a red-haired woman with them, probably the mistress of one of the miscreants, who decided to accompany her "man" because there might be some trinkets to gather for herself.

They enter the garden—the gate has only to be pushed. They place a ladder against the wall, but one of them finds that the pantry door is not locked. They enter, light their lanterns, and don their disguises, which they have brought *in case* some one is about who might recognise one, two, or possi-

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bly all three of them. They notice an open cupboard, and seize the cord they see there. It may be handy to fasten parcels of stolen goods. Then they stealthily creep upstairs. They probably expect to find the place empty, though I suppose they knew Couillard slept near the attic on the third floor, which explains perhaps why they did not go to the studio, from which they might have been heard. Nor did they ransack the ground-floor, where besides the kitchen, the offices, the winter-garden, and the hall, the only rooms were the dining-room, and the drawing-room. As a rule, people do not keep their valuables in such places, but rather in their bedrooms.

The first room they see as they reach the first floor, is the one in which I am sleeping. For one moment, the men are taken aback; they mistake me for my daughter, in whose room I am resting. I am startled out of my sleep, and a revolver is pointed at me: "Where is the money? . . ." They have come to steal, not to kill. I point to the boudoir, the door of which is open. They find the money and take it. They return and ask for the jewels. The chief of the gang, who evidently knows me, asks for the documents. . . . Whilst the others enter the room where my mother is sleeping, the chief ransacks the boudoir, and finds the dummy parcel of documents, reads the words written on it and is satisfied. Meanwhile, the others—possibly soon joined by the chief—ransack the wardrobe in my mother's room. She cries "Meg, Meg," and tries to jump out of bed. . . . They pick up some wadding and force it into her mouth. She is stifled. . . . M. Steinheil has heard the noise, rushes out of his bedroom, but as he reaches the threshold of the bath-room, the men, who have heard him, spring on him, and he is strangled.

They have come to steal, not to kill. . . . They are anxious to escape. As they pass through my poor mother's room they fasten a cord round her neck, to "make sure." Perhaps they did this before murdering my husband. Hastily, they bind me to my bed, and gag me with wadding. One of the men had knocked over the inkstand in the boudoir; the end of his gown dragged through the pool on the floor, and as he came to my room, left a trail of ink behind him.

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The woman wants me to be killed, but the chief of the gang says no. Two murders are quite enough. . . . All the same, they give me a heavy blow on the head. Then they disappear.

The murder is discovered; my husband's card is found in the Underground; the black gowns are missed . . .

Is it madness to suppose that if this theory is true, the head of the gang saw the official who probably was wildly alarmed, and that he said to him: "If I am arrested, I shall prove by the paper I possess, that I was ordered to get hold of those documents, and the whole world will say that the Impasse Ronsin affair was a political crime"?

The police make investigations, in vain; the case is dropped; but I recklessly take it up again, convinced that the murderers will be found and resolve to find them. The reader knows the rest.

Possibly, I may even say probably, all this is hopelessly wrong, or contains only a small element of truth. Who knows?

I have a few conclusions to draw from the unusual and tragic experiences I have gone through.

I cannot doubt that by now my innocence is established in the eyes of the reader; I even venture to believe that I may have won his, or her, sympathy. In this long statement of facts I have all through based my remarks on documents, and those documents are, of course, undeniable.

But my own vindication and full rehabilitation were not my sole objects. Others have suffered, and are suffering, as I have suffered; others may suffer and will suffer so long as certain methods remain in use in France, so long as certain French prisons remain what they are, and certain examining magistrates are allowed to deal with prisoners as one of them did with me; so long as the procedure at trials for murder remains what it is; lastly, so long as a law making Contempt of Court a grave offence is not passed in the country from which I come, and which I love passionately.

I have described Saint-Lazare: the sooner that dilapidated, insanitary prison, with its poisoned atmosphere—poisoned in every sense of the term—is pulled down, the better.

I have described my *Instruction:* the sooner such "examina-

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tions" become *public;* the sooner examining magistrates are forbidden to have preconceived ideas about the guilt of the accused persons who are brought before them, and the sooner they are forbidden to threaten, intimidate, bully, and torture them to gain their doubtful ends—the better.

I have described at length my 353 days in prison: the sooner the French law realises that it has no right to keep a human being who is *supposed* to have or is *suspected* of having committed a crime, within the four walls of a cell for months and months, awaiting his or her trial—the better.

I have described my eleven days' trial—my eleven days' agony—for after nearly a year in prison a human being is nothing but a lump of suffering flesh and nerves: the sooner the procedure is altered, the sooner the judge's interrogatory —inevitably partial and misleading—is suppressed, the sooner an overwhelmingly more important part is given to the cross-examination of the prisoner and all the witnesses, and the sooner the jury at a trial for murder is kept together and prevented, as it is in England, from having any communication with the outside world—the better.

I have described the amazing part the French Press—or rather a section of it—played in the "Impasse Ronsin affair," how it roused Public Opinion against me, and used the worst conceivable methods of coercion and intimidation, how it made my life and that of my daughter an unendurable martyrdom: the sooner the French Press is forbidden to assume the rôle of so-called Justice, to publish the most indiscriminating, arbitrary, imaginary, and damaging articles against beings who are merely "accused," and this not only before, but actually during the trial of those beings—the better.

Let the reader ponder, if only for one moment, over these facts, for instance: day after day, *during my trial,* a number of newspapers published long articles in which I was clearly and emphatically treated as a murderess, as a "Red Widow," as a "Black Panther"! Day by day, the twelve men who were to decide my fate—and indirectly that of my daughter—went home after the hearings in the Court of Assize: they discussed the trial, my attitude, the evidence of the witnesses, the ques-

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tions asked of me, and the answers I made to those questions, with their wives and their friends; they went to their cafés, where they talked and listened; they read the newspapers, and the next morning, before going into Court they talked and listened again, read the morning papers, and were once more exposed to influences.

I do not for one moment believe that French jurors allow their consciences to be misled in matters of life and death—and I have had a splendid proof of this, since the jury acquitted me—but, is it stretching probabilities to admit that, among the twelve members of a jury, one *may* be influenced by what he hears or reads, and in his turn influence his colleagues at the solemn pregnant hour, when they are sent to a room to deliberate over the fate of a human being?

That this book may prove useful to others is my most fervent wish.

I have forgiven my enemies, and I trust those whom I have wronged may forgive me.

As I write these lines, my daughter is resting near me, lying on a couch. She sleeps, and her young husband is painting by the window. There reigns ideal peace and serenity in this room, which overlooks a great English meadow, so fresh, so green. . . . It seems almost unbelievable after the years of maddening turmoil I have lived through. . . .

My little Marthe will be a mother in a few months' time. . . . Her child will one day read these Memoirs. May he, when that time comes, learn—like all other readers of this book, I trust—to understand my life, to forgive whatever weaknesses have been mine, and to love his mother's mother, a woman who has made mistakes in life, but who, God knows, has paid all too dearly for them.

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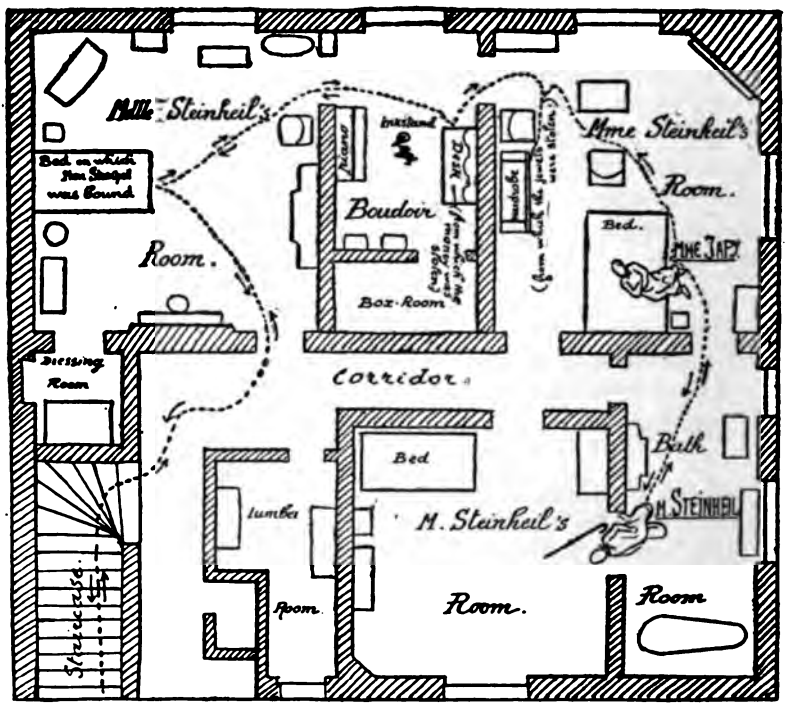

Plan of the first floor of the house in the Impasse Ronsin, where the double murder was committed. Dotted line shows probable movements of the assassins.

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